

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF
THE ADMINISTRATIVE WORK LIFE EXPERIENCES
OF
SELECTED VISIBLE MINORITY FEMALE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

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By
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ABSTRACT

Although Canada is internationally known for its multicultural practices, the work life experiences of visible minority female school principals are unheard and absent from educational leadership research in Canada. In light of the fact that the student population in Canadian schools is increasingly diversifying, it is important to examine the experiences of visible minority female school principals from their own perspectives in order to gain a better understanding of their work life in the education system across Canada.

This research is a qualitative case study of the administrative work life experiences of five visible minority female school principals in five selected Western Canadian public schools. The purpose of the research was to examine and describe the administrative work life experiences of the selected visible minority female principals, with a particular focus on the path they took to become principals, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they used to foster inclusive schools. In-depth interviews were the main research method used in this study, supplemented by document and record analyses and the researcher's reflective journal. Each of the five participants was interviewed three times in order to provide an in-depth analysis of their work experiences. The data were analyzed by using narrative and inductive analysis to let the participants tell their stories first and analyze the research questions inductively second.

The results of this study revealed that the path to the principalship for visible minority female principals is influenced by multi-factors, personal abilities and strengths, challenges, supports, and preparatory and training programs. Each of the participants went through different processes to achieve their goal based on their own unique situations. This study also revealed the participants in their principal positions

faced personal, professional, and organizational challenges related to gender, race, and accent. However, the participants regarded these challenges as opportunities for them to learn and to grow.

The strategies used to build inclusive schools by the five participants stemmed from the participants' personal attributes, skills, support systems, and the contribution of their minority status. In their leadership positions, individuals set a clear mission, varied leadership styles, used reciprocal empowerment, demonstrated an ethic of care, acted as mentors, pursued networking, and mastered necessary positional knowledge.

This study provides recommendations for other visible minority female principals and visible minority female teachers who aspire to principal positions by identifying steps needed to prepare for the principalship; recommendations for Boards of Education on policy making and action as well as recommendations for professional development. Implications for future research are also set out. This study, while confirming the findings of the research done by other scholars, also has its own unique findings, and the five participants' work life experiences provided five pictures of successful visible minority female school principals in Western Canadian public schools.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Canada has historically been, and continues to be, selected by a large number of immigrants as home. Hawkins (1989) stated that Canada has been home to immigrants since the 1500s and that until World War II, Canadian immigration policies favored Britons, French, and northern and western Europeans based on the “White Canada Policy” (p. 16). This policy used environmental racism to exclude members of visible minority groups such as Blacks and Asians on the grounds that they were unsuited to the cold climate of Canada. The only apparent difference evident among members of these first groups of immigrants was linguistic diversity.

According to Mackey (1999), after the Second World War, Canada entered into a period of unequalled prosperity and growth, and experienced an increasing need for immigrants as labour power. Despite Canadian preferences for British immigrants, the majority of immigrants in this period came from Europe, consisting of Polish army veterans, Ukrainians, and other Eastern Europeans. Meanwhile, the Government pursued recruitment of immigrants from Holland, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom. By the late 1950s, north-eastern European sources of immigrants were dwindling. Italian, Portuguese, and Greek immigrants became the engine of the rapid urbanization of southern Ontario and began to form communities in large cities. Diversity in terms of language and ethnicity in Canada’s population was becoming more noticeable (Mackey).

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, international competition for immigrant workers intensified to support industrial expansion in Australia, Europe, and North America. In Canada, European sources for that labor were dwindling. As a result in the 1960s, the Conservative Government changed the selection criteria for immigrants. Questions about ethnicity and country of origin were supplemented with questions about education, skills, and training, allowing skilled immigrants from Asia and other developing countries to enter Canada (Samuda, 1986). By the mid-1970s, more immigrants came from developing countries than from Europe. This influx of new immigrants into Canada clearly displayed and highlighted linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity as compared to the mainstream Canadian population (Samuda).

Between 1981 and 2001, Canada's visible minority immigrant population almost quadrupled from 1.1 million to nearly 4.0 million people. This represented a change from 5% to 13% of the population in 20 years (Statistics Canada, n. d.). According to Statistics Canada (2005), the number of visible minority persons living in Canada was expected to increase from about 4 million people in 2001 to an estimated level of between 6.3 million to 8.5 million people in 2017, increases of between 56% and 111% respectively. In contrast, the remaining White population was estimated to only increase between 1% and 7% over the same period. This would mean that about 1 in 5 Canadians would belong to a visible minority group in 2017 compared to 1 in 8 in 2001, and approximately 1 in 4 (between 21% and 26%) Canadians in 2017 would be foreign-born (immigrants). In 2017 about half of all visible minority persons living in Canada would be South Asian or Chinese, representing an increase in population between 2001 and 2017 of about 2 million people for each group. Blacks would remain the third largest group at about 1 million people in 2017. The fastest growing visible minority groups are

predicted to be the West Asian, Korean, and Arab groups, more than doubling in size from about 200,000 to 425,000 people from 2001 to 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2005, pp. 11-13).

The present and projected increase in the population of visible minority groups presents many challenges for Canadian society, and specifically education. The student populations of Canadian schools are becoming more ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse (Sugunasiri, 2001) but the teaching population does not reflect this changing dynamic (Lau, 2008). This suggests it is important that teachers and principals understand the experiences and customs of these students of diverse backgrounds as they interact with one another, and develop and cherish their respective cultures in the school community (Chan, 2004). In addition, teachers of diverse ethnic backgrounds will need to learn to work with each other and ethnic-cultural differences will be commonplace (Chan).

Schools represent the *status quo* and most principals are from the *majority culture* (Goddard & Hart, 2007). Although demographic minorities such as people of color and ethnic minorities, and visible minority females especially, are becoming visible in teaching positions, the educational administration field has remained largely closed to them because a *glass ceiling* blocks their access to these positions (Hogg, 2001; Trujillo-Ball, 2003). Based on the result of her study of four Mexican-American female principals, Trujillo-Ball added that the ceiling that kept women out of upper management positions was *glass* if one was White, but *concrete* if one was a woman of color. With the small number of minority female principals, along with the many challenges they faced in managing schools, Trujillo-Ball (2003) concluded that the

contribution of minority female principals to education was neglected with the consequent lack of any extensive records of their efforts and achievements.

The area of visible minority female leadership requires more attention and research. The need for research on visible minority female school principals lies first in the fact of increasing immigrant student populations in Canadian schools. Ways on how to effectively deliver a proper education and the practice of inclusive school administration to students with racial, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences need to be investigated. Second, because no studies have been done to date in Canada on the administrative work life experiences of visible minority female principals, their path to the principalship, the challenges they face, and the strategies that contribute to the successful administrative experiences for visible minority female principals in Canadian schools remain unknown. Third, the study will help to theorize the experiences of visible minority female school principals to contribute to and inform leadership practice, recruitment, and preparation programs for school systems in Western Canada. Finally, I believe that the research will make it possible for the participants' voices to be heard.

Researcher's Story

The motivation for this study came from my previous teaching and administrative experience as a teacher and a vice principal in China, and my current status as a visible minority female and an immigrant in Canada. Some of my experiences both in China and Canada, although seemingly unrelated to my research, in fact shaped me into who I am today and help to explain my current interests. We encounter a new life every day; however, the experiences and stories on today's page of life will never be the same as yesterday's. My life experiences yesterday and today, in China and in Canada, are totally different.

My Life Story in China

In China, education is highly valued. However, not everyone has the opportunity to gain an education due to social-economic status. This was especially true for my parents' generation. My mother did not attend school while my father received only three years of schooling. I was born in the small city of Nehe in Heilongjiang province in northeastern China which borders on Russia. My father told me that there were no children who had received a university education in our family. All he wanted in his life was for his daughter to be a university student. By attending and studying at a university, I would bring honor to my family.

In order to fulfill my father's expectations of me, during my high school years (Grade 9 to Grade 12), he woke me up daily at 4:30 a.m. to study and I was required to study until 10:30 p.m. In 1980, my father purchased one of only four colored TVs in my hometown and nearly all the neighbors came to watch TV in our home yard every night. I was allowed to watch TV only on Saturday nights. There were no extra activities either at school or at home for me. Although my father was very strict with my studies, he didn't check what I was learning.

Compared with my father, my mother gave me more freedom. She just kept on telling me how fortunate I and all girls were in these new times to have the chance to go to school. She told me that studying hard and being a knowledgeable person was not only good for them (my parents), but also important for me. She kept all my awards, certificates, school reports, prizes, and gifts which I won from Grade One to Grade Twelve. I often got candies or cookies from my mother after I got an award at school.

The three day University Entrance Exam which I participated in was an important time for my family. My parents were more nervous than I was. I will never

forget when I brought home my acceptance letter from the university. Although my mother was unable to read, she *read* the acceptance letter over and over again with tears running down her cheeks. She went to the neighbors to tell them I would be a university student. My family invited all my former teachers, neighbors, and relatives to celebrate my university acceptance. In the 1980s when I began my postsecondary studies, university acceptance in the whole of China was just 4%. The university was free, there was no tuition fee, and I got 20 Yuan every month from the university for expenses.

The first university I attended was a highly regarded academic university located in one of China's minority ethnic provinces – Inner Mongolia – in northwest China. I really wanted to pursue a Chinese major program and aspired to be a journalist when I graduated but at that time universities had the authority to place students in any subject major according to the university's plan, and students could not change their majors freely. I was assigned to a history major program which I did not like, so after suffering through the first term, I quit this university without discussing my decision with my family. I decided to take the coming year's national entrance exam in July and choose another university in which to study. My parents felt very angry and very disappointed with my decision. My father refused to talk with me. My parents felt that I made them lose face. The following year I was finally offered an English major at the Northeast Forestry University of China, Harbin. I accepted it and my father began to talk to me again. There was no celebration this time and I went to the university quietly.

While at this university, my father wrote me letters and kept encouraging me to study hard. My mother became ill at this time. I worried about my mother's health but my father always assured me she was fine. My mother passed away during my third year

of university but my father did not tell me this grave news until I had finished all my exams.

My father regarded education as more important than anything else. Like others of the older generation, he believed that teaching was a great and meaningful profession. My father always hoped I would become a teacher from the time I was in Grade One. After graduating from Northeast Forestry University with an undergraduate teaching degree, I went to work for a large joint Chinese-American company as a translator and interpreter rather than going directly into teaching. I worked in this company for more than four years. However, I found that I still wanted to be a teacher. My father's hope had deep roots in my life.

The school in which I began my career as a teacher – a Junior and Senior High School – had 78 teachers and staff members. One teacher was Muslim but we never regarded him as a member of a minority group because we all shared many aspects of the same culture, the same skin color, many of the same customs, and spoke the same language. All the students in the school were Chinese. Linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity and multiculturalism were not issues because of the relatively homogeneous nature of China's population of the area in which the school was located. Helping students, raising their interest in learning, and sending more students into the university were the teachers' goals in our school.

In 1997, I visited Australia as a translator for a government delegation. I was impressed with the active class atmosphere, students' creative answers, and teachers' flexible teaching methods in the schools we visited. I was amazed at the variety of skin colors and ethnic backgrounds of the students in the classrooms. It was the first time I had an opportunity to observe student diversity and heard the terms *visible minority* and

multiculturalism. For the first time, I witnessed diversity in the form of racial, ethnic, and linguistic differences. Three questions came to my mind: (a) Why I did not see any visible minority teachers in these schools; (b) If I was a teacher in this school, how would I teach such a varied group of students; and (c) If I was the principal of the school, how would I lead the teachers to provide a diverse group of students with an appropriate education?

In 2003, I was honored to be selected as one of 17 administrators from Tianjin, China to attend a training program in educational administration at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, for ten weeks. This was the first time in my life that I sat in a classroom in a foreign country to learn the Western way of administration. I was so excited and eager to master all the things the professors taught us. When we visited the local schools, I was once again amazed to discover how diverse Canadian classrooms were. My desire to learn about education and administration in this environment of diversity inspired me to study for my Master's degree in Canada. My father's deep hope continued to influence me.

My Life Story in Canada

As mentioned in the previous section, I owe my knowledge of Canadian public Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools to my experiences of visiting schools in Saskatoon and area as a member of the Tianjin Principals Delegation in 2003. In 2004, I was accepted into the Masters Program at the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. I was also fortunate in being able to serve as a translator for the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth groups of Tianjin principals from the years 2005 - 2008. We visited urban (Saskatoon) public and Catholic schools, rural schools, community schools, and schools which offered specialized programs. I was interested in the

diversity of the students in each school and how these schools celebrated the cultures of their students. However, as in Australia, I also saw very few visible minority teachers and principals working in the Saskatoon area schools I visited. Further investigation revealed that there were few visible minority female teachers and principals in Western Canada. I wondered what it would be like if more minority female principals worked in school leadership positions.

Bridging Experiences to Research

Questions and the inquiry they raise are all based on a certain reason. Reflecting upon my life in China and Canada, my deep roots of valuing education, my experience as a female teacher and administrator, my visible minority female immigrant status, my Australian and Canadian school visiting experiences, and especially my curiosity about the reason for the small number of visible minority female school teachers and principals in the ethnically diverse school context in Canada, prompted me to undertake this research.

When I share my curiosity about visible minority female school leadership, and the reasons for this curiosity with the reader, I remember Bourassa (as cited in Kalyn, 2006) wrote:

Wondering is wonderful because it leads us on a journey of reflection, inquiry and research which will result in new knowledge, better understandings, and new ways of doing, all of which will have the same end result. The *wonderer* becomes a more knowledgeable, effective, and professional educator. (p. 1)

Hopefully, my curiosity and inquiry about visible minority female principals' administrative work life experiences in the western Canadian educational context will bring some positive results. Revealing the challenges and successes intertwined in the administrative work experiences of these principals will help society better understand

and support visible minority female school leadership. Educational systems might be encouraged to assist visible minority female teachers to prepare for and step into administrative positions, and help visible minority female principals to build effective leadership skills. Most importantly, it is hoped that this study will serve to encourage visible minority female principals to guide students, especially minority and immigrant students, to have ambitions and work hard to achieve them.

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on visible minority female school leadership. Although this study identifies issues of race, gender, and discrimination which might fit in the critical and feminist paradigms, I position myself in the postpositivist paradigm rather than in the critical or feminist paradigm. Postpositivists believe that the nature of reality can never be known completely but only partially. Because of my lack of experience in the Canadian educational system I could never fully grasp the reality of the administrative work life experiences of the five participants as it existed for them and as they experienced it. I could only try my best to understand and describe their experiences and then retell their experiences to the readers.

Four reasons help to explain why I do not feel qualified to use a critical or a feminist approach. First, the purpose of this study was to explore the participants' administrative work life experiences from their point of view. Second, I was born in China, and the Chinese culture of harmony shaped me to see things from a positive, not a negative or critical, perspective. Third, as new immigrants, both my son and I received benefits from the Canadian government in terms of health, education, and other things for which I feel grateful. Last, these visible minority female principals are already in

high positions as school principals. Equity and class issues in the society, which critical or feminist researchers critique, were not concerns for them.

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the administrative work life experiences of the selected visible minority female principals, with a particular focus on the path they took to become principals, the challenges they faced in their principal positions, and the strategies they used to foster inclusive schools. The investigation focused on the administrative experiences of visible minority female school principals in the Western Canadian public school context, and the results of this study attempt to fill the lack of research on Canadian visible minority female leadership. Especially, the study will allow the researcher to pass on the voices of visible minority female principals by telling their stories about the path they took on their journey to a principalship, the challenges and opportunities they experienced, and the strategies that contributed to their successful administrative experiences.

Research Questions

The main research question for this study is:

How is educational administration experienced from a female, visible minority point of view in the Western Canadian education context?

The main question consists of three sub-questions:

1. What is the path to becoming a school principal for visible minority females?
2. What are the challenges visible minority female principals experienced in their role as school principals?
3. What strategies do visible minority female principals use to make their schools more inclusive?

Significance of the Study

As the student populations in Canadian schools have become more ethnically and racially diverse, the need to recognize using inclusive strategies for increasingly diverse school populations is important for every school administrator, male or female, minority or nonminority. Visible minority female principals bring understanding and insights from their own experiences to their administrative roles in multi-ethnic school communities (Pacis, 2005). However, compared with other principals, visible minority female principals' status contributes to their having a good understanding of and being good role models for students of diverse backgrounds in their schools. They recognize and understand the religious and cultural backgrounds of their students. The most important thing is that their minority status provides a feeling of security and comfort for minority students, and makes it easier to connect with students' parents and the community (Trujillo-Ball, 2003; Turner, 2004). Unfortunately, research on visible minority females in leadership roles is limited, and no Canadian research could be found on visible minority female principalship. This study is significant for the following reasons:

1. It provides information that will help visible minority females make choices regarding a possible career as a principal in the K-12 public education system.
2. It can help readers to better understand the challenges faced by visible minority females making the choice to become a principal.
3. The results of the study enable other principals, male or female, minority or nonminority, to use the female leaders in this study as role models in building their inclusive schools, and analyzing their own leadership characteristics.

4. The information provided to those in positions of authority may help to remove system barriers for visible minority females who are seeking positions of school-based leadership, or who are in positions of school-based leadership.
5. The study may contribute information to universities and colleges about any special needs to consider in preparing visible minority females for educational leadership roles.
6. This study will contribute to filling the gap in the literature on visible minority female leadership in Canada and suggest areas for further significant research.
7. This study is significant for educational administration and leadership by providing information that will be beneficial to educational decision makers.

Delimitations

The following delimitations apply in the study:

1. The study included five visible minority female principals of public schools in Western Canada.
2. The study did not include nonminority female principals.
3. The study did not include visible minority male principals.

Limitations

The study had the following limitations:

1. The differences in culture, religion, and customs of each participant and their being located in different provinces with different educational systems may impact the perceptions of these visible minority female principals.
2. The number of participants may limit the research findings.

Assumptions

The research assumed:

1. The participants' personal experience and knowledge assist in this research.
2. The participants understood the questions asked in the semi-structured in-depth interviews and were willing to let their voices be heard.
3. The personal experiences of the participants provide a chance to learn about the administrative work life of visible minority female principals, and will add to the literature and research about visible minority female leadership.
4. The results of this study of visible minority female administrators in Western Canadian schools enriches educational administration by providing answers to the research questions.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

1. *Visible minorities*. The concept of visible minority applies to persons who are identified according to the Employment Equity Act of Canada and Human Rights Legislation as being non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color. A detailed classification of visible minority includes Chinese, South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan), Black (e.g., African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali), Arab/West Asian (e.g., Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan), Filipino, South East Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese), Latin American, Japanese and Korean (Statistics Canada, n. d.). In this study, which focuses on visible minority women principals, the term *visible minority* refers to women of color or non-white women.

2. *Immigration*. Immigration refers to the movement of nationals of any given country to another country for the purpose of settlement (Statistics Canada, n. d.).
3. *Immigrant*. This title applies to a person who has been granted the right to permanently live in Canada by immigration authorities. It usually applies to persons born outside Canada but may also apply to a small number of persons born inside Canada to parents who are foreign nationals. Once a person has been accorded immigrant status it becomes a life-long attribute as long as the person lives in Canada (Statistics Canada, n. d.). In this study, the participants are immigrants.
4. *Multiculturalism*. The term multiculturalism generally refers to a state of both cultural and ethnic diversity within the demographics of a particular social space. Multiculturalism policies are aimed at preserving the cultures or cultural identities – usually those of immigrant groups – within a unified society. In this context, multiculturalism advocates a society that extends equitable status to distinct cultural and religious groups, no one culture predominating. However, the term is more commonly used to describe a society consisting of minority immigrant cultures existing alongside predominant and/or indigenous cultures (Bannerji, 2000).
5. *Canadian multiculturalism*. Canadian multiculturalism refers to the presence and persistence of diverse racial and ethnic minorities who define themselves as different and who wish to remain so. Ideologically, multiculturalism consists of a relatively coherent set of ideas and ideals pertaining to the celebration of Canada's cultural diversity. Multiculturalism within the confines of the Charter

of Rights and Freedoms is structured around the management of diversity through formal initiatives in the federal, provincial, and municipal domains (Dewing & Leman, 2006).

6. *Principal*. The term refers to the head of a college or school (Webster's English Dictionary, 1997). The term describes a teacher appointed by a board of education or a conseil scolaire, as the case may be, to perform the duties of a principal (Saskatchewan Education Act, 1995). However, K-12 education is a provincial right; each province in Canada has its own Education Act.
7. *Cultural diversity*. Ethnic, gender, racial, and socio-economic variety in a situation, institution, or group; the coexistence of different ethnic, gender, racial, and socio-economic groups within one social unit (Webster's English Dictionary, 1997).
8. *Networking*. Means to learn how to make connections and build relationships (Webster's English Dictionary, 1997).
9. *Mentoring*. Refers to a developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps a less experienced or less knowledgeable person (Webster's English Dictionary, 1997)

Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter One, the introduction of the study is outlined and portions of the researcher's life story are presented. In addition, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and the definition of terms used in the study are introduced. Chapter Two reviews the literature pertinent to the problem that will be investigated in this study. Chapter Three outlines the setting and the research methodology, including the instrumentation, selection of

participants, data collection methods, validity and reliability of the study, ethical considerations, and data analysis. Chapter Four presents the stories of the five participants. Chapter Five inductively analyzes the data collected from the five participants. Chapter Six concludes the study with a summary of the stories, the findings, implications, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

People's experiences are influenced and continue to be influenced not only by their own family backgrounds but by the society and country in which they are living, the specific professions they choose to practice, as well as the views and expectations related to the history and culture of their society and the profession in which they work. In light of this, I believe that the history of Canadian multiculturalism, diversity and immigration, and the history of females in education in Canada have impacted the work life experiences of visible minority female principals in Canada.

In this chapter, a review of the literature related to the work life of visible minority female principals will be presented in four sections. In the first section, the history of multiculturalism, and diversity and immigration in Canada will be introduced. In the second section, the history of females in education in Canada will be presented. In the third section, educational leadership theory and female educational leadership theory will be summarized. In the last section, visible minority female principal leadership will be discussed.

Multiculturalism, and Diversity and Immigration

To know and understand Canada and her inhabitants, one needs to be acquainted with the way in which immigrants came to be here. A historical review of the reasons why and how people came to be in Canada can provide this awareness. Two broad

topics – multiculturalism, and diversity and immigration – are useful in organizing some thoughts in these two areas.

Multiculturalism

Canada historically is a multicultural and immigrant country. Canada's value to the European colonizers (the French first, and later the British) was initially through the fur trade. It did not take long for the Europeans to realize that the First Nations people who had been living here for thousands of years were essential to the fur trade so they quickly colonized them (Monture, 2007). Monture stressed that the Europeans regarded the First Nations people as inferior and useful only in terms of supplying furs. It is important to note that these early European visitors to Canada were predominantly men because freedom of movement for women was severely restricted (Lynne, 1998). Lynne found that because European women could not accompany the men to Canada, "First Nation women were especially essential to the fur trade" (§ 3) in terms of the domestic, social, orienteering, and sexual services which they were able to provide these first visitors to what is now Canada.

With the decline of the fur trade and to stem the threat of American expansion and domination on the basis of the Manifest Destiny policy (O'Sullivan, 1845), the British government sought immigrants from Europe to populate what was viewed as the empty territories of western Canada (Carrothers, 1948). The Canadian Government continued this policy in two ways after Canada became an independent country in 1867: building the Canadian Pacific Railway, and aggressive recruitment of immigrants from northern and eastern Europe by Clifford Sifton from 1896 to 1901 on behalf of the Laurier Liberal Government (Hawkins, 1989). Thus, Canada from its very beginnings was a multicultural country based on a deliberate practice of creating a White Canada

(Hawkins), and later opening its borders to people from other countries (Hawkins, 1988).

The literature shows that multiculturalism in present-day Canada can be viewed from two perspectives: positive and negative. From a positive point of view, Phillion (2002) believed that multiculturalism is about respecting, honoring, and learning from differences. Phillion's belief supports Wong's (1997) claim that multiculturalism was a suitable and best way for diverse ethnic Canada to build a peaceful and harmonious society. Tepper (1997) regarded multiculturalism as a means for achieving Canadian social cohesion and national unity, and Pearson (1997) believed that multicultural Canada combined different cultures and languages in one country which made Canada unique.

Negative views on Canadian multiculturalism are based on critical views and different opinions that people hold about multiculturalism. Greenfield (1997) thought Canadian multiculturalism has weakened Canadian citizenship. Zong (1997) provided information from his 1995 Vancouver survey which showed that about half of the respondents disagreed that the multicultural policy has promoted a democratic and tolerant society in Canada. Sugunasiri (2001) believed multiculturalism was regarded as a label for *others* – minorities and immigrants – and something else for mainstream Canadians. Koilpillai (2004) stated that Canada's multiculturalism approach was really a form of racism. Bannerji (2000) observed that members of visible minority groups "continue to live here as outsiders-insiders of the nation which offers a proudly multicultural profile to the international community" (p. 91). Aujla (2006) took exception to the positive manner in which Canadian multiculturalism was being portrayed by saying that there exists "a dominant culture which categorizes [certain people] as 'visible minorities', 'ethnics', immigrants, and foreigners – categories

considered incommensurable with being a *real* Canadian, despite the promises of multiculturalism” (p. 172). Mackey (1999) concluded multiculturalism in Canada is displayed in clothing, food, and all kinds of activities except politics.

Diversity and Immigration

Canada is a country built on immigration (Mulder & Korenic, 2005). Wilkes, Guppy, and Farris (2007) wrote that Canada’s beginnings are rooted in immigration, beginning with the Aboriginal Peoples who are believed to have come here from Asia some 13,000 years ago. Europeans first visited Canada about the year 1000, but permanent settlements did not begin until the 1600s. As the largest population group and the colonizers of Canada, Europeans introduced the social, economic, and political structures that formed the basis of Canadian confederation (Porter, 1965). The important structures were a British-based system of government and law, and concessions to Quebec in terms of language, law, and religion. Few benefits accrued to the Aboriginal peoples.

Canada became a self-governing country as a result of the “British North America Act” of 1867. Wilkes et al. (2007) noted that from its very beginning, Canada turned to the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States for people to populate its vast territory, particularly western Canada (also Hawkins, 1989). Immigrants from other parts of the world were excluded by a variety of measures (e.g., the Chinese Head Tax; various Passenger Acts, as cited in Wilkes et al.). The Immigration Act of 1910 gave the government the authority to exclude people “belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada” (Section 38, as cited in Wilkes et al., p. 8) from Canada. In effect, “Canada adopted an Atlantic face that was positive and welcoming, and a Pacific face that was negative and uninviting” (Wilkes et al., p. 8).

During the latter half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, Canada pursued an immigration policy that had as its primary objective supplying a labor pool, first for settlement and agriculture, then to support industrialization (“Multiculturalism”, n. d.). Balakrishnan and Hou (2004) added:

While Western European origins predominated before 1960, in the ‘60s and ‘70s most immigrants were primarily from southern Europe. Since then, however, populations from the Third World countries have formed the majority of immigrants. Thus, more than one-half of the immigrants in the 1980s were the so-called visible minority groups of blacks, South Asian, Chinese, and many Latin and Central Americans. In 1991, 68% of new arrivals to Canada were visible minority immigrants, about two-thirds of whom were blacks, Chinese, and South Asians. (p. 173)

Canadian society is becoming more diverse and multiethnic (Goddard & Hart, 2007). This increased diversity in immigrants was evident in the 2001 census in which more than 200 different ethnic origins were reported. After Canadian, British, and French ethnic origins, the most common ancestries were German, Italian, Chinese, Ukrainian, and North American Indian. The 2001 census also found that 18.4% of the population was born outside Canada – the highest proportion in 70 years – and that immigrants were increasingly from Asia. The proportion of the population that belonged to a visible minority group had also increased between 1996 and 2001, from 11.2% to 13.4%. Today, immigration outpaces the natural birth rate in Canada and accounts for 53% of Canada’s overall population growth. Canada is often dubbed *the global village in one country* (Statistics Canada, 2005, pp. 10-12) because the face of Canada, particularly in the larger urban centers, is changing dramatically. By 2017, one in five Canadians will likely be a member of a visible minority group (Statistics Canada).

An increasingly visible minority (immigrant) population in Canada is not without its difficulties and stressors. Balakrishnan and Hou (2004) found that of three status

factors – language proficiency, gender, and visible minority – lack of language proficiency shapes immigrant integration experiences the most negatively. Dewing and Leman (2006) argued that despite commitments to a more inclusive society embedded in the Charter, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, and other such legislation, members of ethnic and visible minorities continue to experience barriers to participation in the workplace. Bissoondath (2002) commented that visible minorities continue to be underrepresented in most institutions and professions and are often negatively portrayed in the media.

As the numbers of immigrants and visible minorities continue to grow in Canada, the life and situation of immigrants living in Canada need to be known and understood (Schoorman, 2001). Education becomes an important *window* for understanding immigrants and visible minorities in multicultural Canada. In today's Canadian schools, visible minority and immigrant students are present in almost every [urban] classroom (Schoorman). The question of how education and leadership should address school diversity needs in the Canadian educational context requires an answer in view of the increasing number of visible and minority students appearing in the schools in Canada. Tillman (2002) emphasized that ethnic diversity in the field of education has begun to stimulate discussions about race and ethnicity, usually under the umbrella term of multiculturalism. The main issues for some educators have become multicultural leadership and managing diversity (Crenshaw, 2004; Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Riehl, 2000).

History of Females in Education in Canada

Wesson (1998) stated, "School administrators generally come from the ranks of teachers. Therefore, a historical perspective of women and minorities in teaching

provides a framework for understanding the role of women and minorities in administration” (p. 1). Teaching in Canada’s early history was predominantly carried out by men. Females were first allowed to teach in the 1840s (“Submission”, 2006). It wasn’t until the latter part of the nineteenth century that women outnumbered men in the teaching profession. Walsh and Brigham (2007) suggested five reasons that might account for this. First, schools by this time had become publicly funded, compulsory, and free for students. Secondly, men were choosing to enter professions and occupations other than teaching because they could make more money doing other work, so an acute shortage of teachers developed. Third, there were few professions and occupations which women could enter, and teaching was one of the few options available to them. Fourth, women accepted the lower level of pay associated with teaching. Finally, it was generally accepted that teaching became a natural occupation for women who assumed to be by nature caring and nurturing. Thus women were assigned to elementary schools to teach. This ideology followed the practice whereby women were admitted into primary teaching, reserving the higher grades and higher pay for men.

The entry of women into teaching was difficult (“Submission”, 2006). Local school authorities imposed strict regulations on their lifestyles, including dress, public and private conduct and behaviour, when they could be seen publicly, and social activities. Preference was given to hiring young, single women who, once they married, were not allowed to teach. These first teachers were typically given assignments in the lower grades and were minimally paid (“Submission”). It wasn’t until the 1960s that the conditions for female teachers began to improve somewhat (Walsh & Brigham, 2007). Wallace (2007) stated that from the 1970s through to the 1990s, in most Canadian provinces, about 70% of the teachers were female, and 30% of the teachers were male.

However, female administrators in schools were still underrepresented; fewer than 30% of administrators were female (¶ 6).

Prentice (as cited in Weiler, 1998) noted that the deliberate segregation of women into the lower grades was deliberate policy that has left a very long legacy. The demographic ratio situation has not changed much for females in education in the 21st century in Canada. For example, according to Saskatchewan Leaning (2004), female teachers made up 70% of the teaching force in Saskatchewan in 2003. However, only 42% of Saskatchewan principals were female (p. 122). No statistics on the number of visible minority female principals in Canada could be found. Of 81 school systems located in the four Western Canadian provinces that were initially contacted as part of this study, only one of the one-half that responded indicated that no visible minority female principals worked in their systems. This could well explain the reason why there is no Canadian research or literature on visible minority female principals. The literature review in the next section of this chapter begins with an overview of educational leadership. This will be followed by a brief discussion of female educational leadership.

Educational Leadership and Female Educational Leadership

As education is seen more and more as being central to the transformation of society (Lumby & Coleman, 2007), educational leadership theory needs to focus more on diversity. Lumby and Coleman stated, “There is a very large body of literature on educational leadership but a much smaller body relating it to diversity” (p. 68). Ovando (2002) noted that educational leaders, especially school principals, are facing increasingly diverse student populations in their schools, and they require leadership theory which includes diversity to help them to understand these students’ personal cultural values, beliefs, experiences, and motives. Principals also need educational

leadership theory to respond to the challenge of creating positive relationships in the context of diversity by promoting educational excellence for all – students, teachers, support staff, and parents.

Educational Leadership

While diversity is not presently a major focus of educational leadership theory, school-based administrators, as Reboire (2001) pointed out, are increasingly becoming responsible for providing educational leadership, not only to diverse groups of students and their parents, but also to diverse groups of teachers and staff members in their schools. Ovando (2002) emphasized that the increasing ethnically and culturally diverse student population in schools requires principals to use different styles of educational leadership to meet students' needs.

Leadership Styles

The characteristic of any style of leadership is defined as the ability to shape and give direction to social organization (Evers & Lakomski, 2000) and to exercise influence (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). J. Collins (2005) stressed, "True leadership only exists if people follow when they have the freedom not to" (p. 13). However, Evers and Lakomski believed that there is not a fixed form of leadership, but that leadership means leaders should make decisions in different ways to different people in different contexts. In the educational context, leadership can be described in terms of many styles, with transactional leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, moral leadership, interpersonal leadership, distributed leadership, and inclusive leadership, (Greenebaum et al., 2007; Lumby & Coleman, 2007) being referred to most frequently. For the purposes of this study about the administrative work life experiences of visible minority female principals, transformational and inclusive leadership styles were

selected because these leadership styles were regarded as playing a key role in managing the diversity of the students in schools (Goddard & Hart, 2007; Lumby & Coleman, 2007; Ovando, 2002; Riehl, 2000; J. Ryan, 2005; Tillman, 2002).

Transformational leadership. Burns (1978) explained transformational leadership as the ability to take an organization to a higher level using specific leadership skills and techniques. Kark, Shamir, and Chen's (2003) study identified four components of transformational leadership behavior: inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) found that "transformational leadership had very strong direct effects on teachers' work settings and motivation with weaker but still significant effects on teachers' capacities" (p. 223). Acker (1999) found in her study that the female principal "by genuinely caring about her staff and enabling them to do their best . . . inspired allegiance both to herself and the school philosophy" (p. 195). Schaubroeck, Lam, and Cha (2007) believed transformational leadership is effective in a variety of settings.

Transformational leadership can play a major role in building and sustaining leadership capacity in schools (Jason, 2000). Transformational leaders can pave the way and shape the culture to create a desired and shared leadership model (Greenebaum et al., 2007). Transformational leaders address diverse group needs (Kellerman, 1984) and are people-centered and morality-centered (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). Shields (1996) believed transformational leaders are able to help community members articulate and examine their beliefs about the needs of students, and about how students, teachers, and communities should interact. Leithwood (1994) found that transformational leadership practices had significant direct and indirect effects on the outcomes of school restructuring initiatives and teacher-perceived student outcomes.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) identified two significant conclusions in their study of transformational leadership. They found that transformational leadership had a positive effect on students' achievement and students' engagement in school. As well, transformational principal leadership had both direct and indirect effects on teachers' job satisfaction and changed teacher practices. These are important in terms of addressing the multicultural student populations (Rebore, 2001) and the diversity of the staff members who teach these students (Ovando, 2000).

Inclusive leadership. As the term implies, inclusive leadership in the context of schools and education is a model that advocates the idea of including everyone in the school experience (Greenebaum et al., 2007). The concept of diversity in educational administration is evolving into the acceptance of an inclusive leadership perspective. Greenebaum et al., and Lumby and Coleman (2007) believed inclusive leadership means including people in the decision-making process of the school community regardless of ability, gender, social class, language, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. Based on this definition, inclusive leadership has a strong foundation in the literature of multicultural and culturally responsive teaching.

Principals are key to changing schools into inclusive institutions and communities (Kugelmass, 2003). Ainscow and Kaplan (2005) emphasized that the development of an inclusive culture requires a shared commitment by staff to processes that produce an overall enhancement in participation among all members of the school community. Riehl (2000) suggested that ideas related to inclusive leadership can be applied to the case of reforming schools to respond to the needs of students of diverse backgrounds. The development of inclusive structures and practices must be

accompanied by new understandings and values (about diversity) or they will not result in lasting change.

Female Educational Leadership

Haar, Palladino, and Grady (2007) noted that scholars who have been studying female leadership for more than 20 years are finding that female leaders are still battling gender and sex stereotype biases. The studies of Blackmore (2002) and Eckman (2004) of female leadership in education found that women who hold positions in the upper echelons of educational administration find themselves in situations similar to those of leaders in the business world. Both groups of women operate in male-dominated fields where standards of appropriate leadership behavior have been based on a male paradigm. Mertz and McNeely (1998) stated that although males continue to dominate administrative positions in the United States, females have gradually but steadily moved into administrative positions in the past 20 years in significant numbers. Acker (2005) noted a similar trend in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, female leaders in both groups continue to be underrepresented in high leadership positions (Jones, Ovando, & High, 2009).

Pacis (2005) found that much of the research on educational leadership has centered on traditional epistemologies written from the perspective of Western society which has consistently excluded the voice of women and minorities. Shakeshaft, Nowell, and Perry (1991) proposed that research about women and leadership should be conducted from a female-defined paradigm that includes a method of inquiry growing out of personal experiences, feelings, and the needs of the researcher. The small amount of research in existence on women in educational leadership as compared to the large

quantity on white males led Pacis to conclude that the traditional view is that men, and not women, were supposed to be leaders.

As more females enter leadership positions in private and public companies, elementary and secondary schools, and postsecondary institutions of learning, female leadership is becoming an important area of study (Boatman, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Blackmore (1999), Young (2003), and Young and McLeod (2001) believed gender is the center which defines and influences female educational leadership. In their view, male standards and privileges are the norms used to guide leadership practices, promotions, and succession, and define gender roles. In their studies of gender issues in education, Young and McLeod, and Eckman (2004) pointed out that research on gender and female educational leadership revealed that female principals perform their roles in school differently than do males. However, educational leadership norms continue to be interpreted on the basis of male privilege and standards (Smulyan, 2000).

Grogan's (1999) and Trujillo-Ball's (2003) studies found that females were underrepresented in educational administrative positions at all levels except elementary principalships world wide. Smulyan (2000) suggested that the overrepresentation of female principals in elementary schools and their under-representation in secondary schools is based on the belief that women are perceived as being more suitable at nurturing and teaching small and young children while men, with their traditionally defined masculine characteristics, are thought to be more capable of dealing with older students. Although school principal positions, especially secondary school principalships, continue to be dominated by males, Mertz and McNeely (1998) stated that females are slowly but steadily moving into educational administrative positions at all levels in increasing numbers. Trujillo-Ball commented, "Men are better accepted and

trusted as leaders, whereas women and minorities must prove themselves before trust is considered” (p. 62). Smith and Hale (2002) observed that parents, students, and teachers sometimes hold different expectations for women administrators than for male administrators.

Blackmore (1999; 2002) stated that women, especially strong women, who had gained leadership positions created *trouble* for educational organizations because they were regarded as a source of *trouble* to the male-dominated standards of management by being different. Blackmore (2002) added that the discourse of female educational leadership itself is a form of trouble because of the word *female*, with the result that “it takes an extraordinary woman to do what an ordinary man does” (p. 56). Blackmore found that many female leaders in education had tried hard to fit in to the male-dominated norms to be good and competitive leaders. Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) claimed that women often find themselves in no-win situations. If women are accommodating, polite and passive, as society expects them to be, they lose their credibility as leaders. On the other hand, if they are competitive, aggressive and tough, they may have denied their identity.

Researchers indicate that women lead differently from men. Davenport’s (2007) study showed that women appear to be less influenced by hierarchy in their thinking, integrate different roles more fully, stress the building of relationships, and work at making connections among organizations. Women leaders are also very concerned with efficiency and effectiveness. Davenport found that women leaders in general display several common characteristics: a strong caring ethic, cultivating relationships, inclusion and connections, and the use of voice to empower others.

From her work on female leadership, Australian Blackmore (2002) categorized female leadership into eight gender scripts or types which are useful: being strong script, superwoman script, choosing leadership over love script, postmodernist script, women's style of leadership script, power script, professional success script, and social male script. This categorization yields a very useful observation: that contrary to what people might want to believe, women are far from being homogeneous in terms of leadership qualities, abilities, and skills. Of the eight scripts, the postmodernist and women's styles of leadership can be regarded as female. The remaining six types – being strong, superwoman, choosing leadership over love, power, professional success, and social male – are remarkably male in their execution. Blackmore's scripts can be critiqued on the basis that these scripts continue and maintain a gendered view of leadership.

The Hagberg Consulting Group (1998) found that female leaders model six attributes: being able to create and articulate a clear vision; goal setting and setting clear direction; being able to take charge in difficult situations; being inspirational role models; setting high performance standards; and being able to assume responsibilities. Although these leadership attributes derive from a study of female leadership, they suggest generic qualities of leadership irrespective of the leaders or their genders. These are the talents that all good leaders possess.

Good leadership is the result of some basic skills. Wesson (1998) suggested ten tips for success for female principals: know yourself, be prepared, analyze and strategize, convert negative work experiences into positive factors, be aware of critical factors that affect advancement, affiliate, share goals, find a mentor and be a mentor, and develop networks. Bancroft, Wills, and DePass (1988) highlighted the importance of mentors and networks as supports for female leaders. Ovando (2002) added the

following important competencies for female educational leaders, especially school principals: knowledge of the cultural background, traditions, and needs of the local school community; an attitude that promotes standards for action based upon the belief in the educability of all children; and the skill to create a nurturing school environment which is inclusive of all individuals regardless of their cultural background.

Visible Minority Female Principalship

As we enter the 21st century, female leadership faces the added characteristics of racial and ethnic differences and diversity. In reference to the American context, Kropiewnicki and Shapiro (2001) explained, “One of the challenges of school leadership in the new millennium is to be responsive to the diverse needs of students within our democratic society” (p. 3). The challenge to attain fair representation and adequate advancement opportunities within school districts is a dilemma that concerns minority women (Pacis, 2005). Carr (1997) mentioned that, in Canada, one of the factors inhibiting the ability of educators to respond to diversity is the lack of representation of principals and teachers from minority cultures. Pacis found the number of minority principals, both male and female, in the United States to be 16%, of which 11% were African-American, 4 % were Hispanic, but no more than 1% were Asian American (p. 9). The number of visible minority female school principals in Canada is not available.

Trujillo-Ball (2003) found that the work life of minority female principals has not been researched to any great extent, and the evidence of their success has not been adequately recorded. No Canadian research could be found on visible minority female principals’ administrative work life experiences so that their leadership style, characteristics, conflicts, barriers, or strategies keep unknown. Research on visible minority female school principals in this study is mainly based on studies by American

scholars whose primary focus is on African-American female principals and, to a lesser extent, Hispanic female principals (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Davenport, 2007; Dillard, 1995; Holtkamp, 2002; Hopkins, 2003; Jean-Marie, 2005).

Only a small number of American studies were found to have looked at other ethnic minority female school principals. Pacis (2005) and Amodeo and Emslie (1985) studied Asian-American principals while Trujillo-Ball (2003) studied Mexican-American principals. Pacis referred to “the lack of culturally diverse literature on leadership . . . As a result, little is known about the beliefs and perceptions of minority female principals, and even less is known about Asian[-American] female principals” (p. 12). Mabokela and Madsen (2005) were unable to find female principals who were people of color for their study on visible minority principals so they had to change their initial design of the study to include four assistant principals who were African-American. After fourteen years, Dillard’s (1995) observation that the “experience of African-Americans and other people of color have been conspicuously absent in the literature surrounding teaching and the principalship” (p. 539) is still true today.

Visible minority female principal leadership, if viewed as a distinct part of female educational leadership, shares many similarities with the female principalship in general. These include things such as dealing with various difficulties and challenges, different leadership styles, caring about students, as well as the small number of female principals, especially in the high schools. However, visible minority female principals, because of their unique status compared with the general group of female educational leaders, have their own leadership characteristics which will be discussed in the following section. Three areas of inquiry related to visible minority female principalship

will be reviewed: a) the path to the principalship; b) the challenges in the principalship; and c) strategies for building inclusive schools.

The Path to the Principalship

Holtkamp (2002) stated that all women experience challenges in their efforts to become administrators. These challenges are even more pronounced for women of color. For many minority female school leaders, their path to attaining an administrative position has been paved with sacrifices (Crenshaw, 2004) in term of the challenges and difficulties they faced. However, influences and expectations from others, their own strengths and skills, supports, and preparatory and training programs helped these females to deal with the challenges toward their goal of a principal position. Five variables – influences and expectations, abilities and strengths, challenges, supports, and preparatory and training programs – were found to contribute to the path of the visible minority female principals' entry into the principalship.

Influences and Expectations

When visible minority females sought a principal position, they were often influenced by others, particularly the expectations others had of them. Trujillo-Ball (2003) noted the following in her study of visible minority female principals:

The influence and expectations placed on them [visible minority females] have come from role models and mentors, family, culture, society, the kitchen table, and the schools in which they have worked, because these influences and expectations have had a large impact on the creation of their identity. (p. 142)

The visible minority female principal participants in Gaskins' (2006) study also mentioned that family values and expectations were very demanding for them. Family members' expectations guided them to set their goals (either early career goals or later school administration goals) and to make sacrifices to achieve them.

Abilities and Strengths

The limited studies of visible minority female administrators identify abilities and strengths common to this group of principals. The abilities and strength varied from individual to individual. However, some of these characteristics are common to females while others appear to be connected with a particular racial group. For African-American female principals, Lomotey (as cited in Mertz & McNeely, 1998) found as common characteristics a commitment to students and their ability to learn, a genuine concern about students and their well-being, and a unique understanding of the students and their community.

Pacis' (2005) study on Asian-American female principals found that they commonly exhibited a passion for learning, understanding their students, making a difference to their students' learning, self-confidence, a strong caring ethic, and an ability to overcome negative experiences. All these abilities and strengths served as a foundation for these visible minority females when they sought a principalship. With these abilities and strengths, they could face the challenges which blocked their way to school leadership.

Challenges

Visible minority females faced a number of challenges on their path to a principalship. A review of the literature identified seven challenges: pressure from the family, conflict between home and career, gender and race, lack of role models, lack of mentors, negative assumptions, and tokenism.

Pressure from the family. The studies on visible minority female school principals indicated family as an important support factor which helped visible minority females to seek a principal position (Conrad & Conrad, 2007). Pacis' (2005) study on

Asian-American female principals was an exception to this. The participants in her study indicated that pressure from the family became a challenge for them when they aspired to a principal position. Although education itself was regarded as very important in Asian culture and family, “. . . education as a career was not viewed as highly prestigious in Asian culture” (p. 32). In most cases, careers in medicine, law, engineering, or computer science, which generally yield high salaries, were given high priority in Asian-American families. This attitude discouraged Asian-American females from seeking educational leadership positions. Pacis (2005) stated that respecting and honoring the advice of senior family members has deep roots in Asian culture, and going against their advice was regarded as taking a risk. However, Asian-American females who were successful in a principal position eventually received praise and support from their families and won the respect of their community.

Conflict between home and career. Hopkins’ (2003) study of African-American female principals found that marital relationship problems and limited family relationships were common among visible minority female principals. This finding underscores Young and McLeod’s (2001) study which highlighted the importance of personal supports such as family and friends for visible minority female principals. Smulyan (2000) found that “women with families more frequently balance the decisions they make about changing jobs against their family responsibilities” (p. 75).

Gender and Race. The issues of gender and race as major barriers to females seeking entry into a principal’s position is receiving attention in the literature (Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Mogadime, 2008, Smulyan, 2000). Scinto (2006) found that administrative appointments were frequently based on ethnicity and gender, with males

from the dominant culture being given preference over minority group members, particularly visible minority women.

Trujillo-Ball (2003) found that any research that has been conducted on females in general, and Black females especially, shows that race and gender discrimination and perceived attributes have hindered women from minority groups from gaining leadership positions in education. Mogadime (2008) explained the reason is “historically situated within systems of racism and sexism that arise from the colonial period and continue through to our contemporary moment in history” (p. 3).

Bush, Glover, and Sood (2006) noted widespread evidence of covert or indirect discrimination, coupled with a racial *glass ceiling* and negative stereotyping against women of color. Gardiner, Grogan, and Enomoto (1999) referred to numerous conflicts that arise from racism which blocked visible minority females achieving leadership positions.

Lack of role models. Few studies on visible minority principals and role models could be located. Carr (1997) pointed out that one of the factors inhibiting the ability of educators to respond to diversity is the lack of representation of principals and teachers from minority cultures in the school system. The principals surveyed in Carr’s study agreed that, given equal qualifications, the recruitment, hiring, and retaining of racial minority teachers and principals would provide much needed role models for racial minority students and teachers, and bring a broadened perspective into the system.

Pacis’ (2005) study found few Asian-American role models existed. Asian-Americans were underrepresented in educational leadership because of the Asian cultural notion that careers in education were not highly desirable. Pacis’ study indicated the lack of minority representation in leadership roles might cause Asian-American

females to think they did not belong in school leadership. Pacis' study matched the findings of Bancroft et al.'s (1988) study that the lack of visible minority role models in the minority community acts as a barrier for female principals as they seek a principal position.

Lack of mentors. The issue of locating mentors is even more difficult than finding role models for visible minority female principals (Scinto, 2006). Gardiner et al. (1999) mentioned:

An issue for women of color is that they have even fewer people to select as their mentors from the ranks of administrators of color. Minority women would like to have mentors of color, but they can't always find them . . . Many women of color have found male mentors of color, which they appreciate from the standpoint of having people who understand racism and cultural politics, but they also want women of color mentors, and feel that too few are available. (p.16)

Gardiner et al. added that despite an extensive background in teaching and academic preparation, these women say they often feel inadequate and unprepared as leaders because they need additional and specific mentoring beyond what they are currently getting.

Pacis (2005) argued females and minorities learning from male mentors often end up adopting male views and behaviors. As a result females, as noted by Trujillo-Ball (2003), are faced with a contradiction: On the one hand, they may regard themselves from an authority perspective, displaying the aggressive and competitive behaviors characteristic of male leaders. On the other hand, these behaviors are contrary to the behaviors to which women have been socialized.

Assumptions. Two assumptions emerged from the literature, one related to Asian-American visible minority females, and the other to African-American visible minority principals. Pacis' (2005) study showed the stereotypical concept of Asians was

that they were smart, good, quiet, and hardworking. This generalized trait could work against Asian-American females when they sought a leadership position because school systems like to select strong candidates to be school leaders rather than quiet and shy females. Smulyan (2000) found that it was assumed that African-American principals can or should only work with other African-Americans, with the result that they were often assigned to schools with predominantly African-American students.

Tokenism. Gaskins (2006) found that visible minority females were often appointed to principalships because it was thought to look good, and created the impression that the school board was practicing gender equity. Bancroft et al. (1988) stated that the appointment of members of minority groups to positions of leadership was sometimes done to appease ethnic groups, or some weak school may be in need of rejuvenation so the current principal is replaced with a new person aspiring to the principal position. Scinto (2006) noted that because the *gatekeepers* to the school system continue to be predominantly white and male, the practice of tokenism persists, making it difficult for females to gain entry to upper level positions. Trujillo-Ball (2003) mentioned that although minorities have been given opportunities to gain leadership positions in education (Mendez-Morse, 2003), they have been assigned to principalships according to their ethnicity.

Supports

The literature showed that mentors, the community, church members, and other educational leaders serve as important sources of support to visible minority females who aspire to a principal position (Gardiner et al., 1999; Young & McLeod, 2001). Gardiner et al. and Conrad and Conrad (2007) noted that the mentors of women of color who understand their situations and struggles act as a support mechanism. Pacis (2005)

stated having mentors and a support community allowed Asian-American female principals to overcome the general belief in Asian cultures that education was a less than desirable career choice. Gaskins' (2006) study showed church community members and other educational leaders served as great mentors for visible minority female principals. Church members served as mentors by being available to listen to these females as they talked about their difficulties, talked with these females, supported and helped them in spiritual ways to strengthen their will to seek school leadership positions and confirm their beliefs in education, and encouraged them to serve their students.

Preparatory and Training Programs

Holtkamp's (2002) study indicated that professional training programs would provide a better understanding of educational leadership to aspiring visible minority females when they were considering a principalship. It is important for visible minority women to be aware of the positive characteristics of female principals as they seek positions in educational administration. Awareness would provide women the opportunity to evaluate their personal characteristics and compare them to females that are presently in leadership roles. Pacis (2005) supported Holtkamp's statements by emphasizing that leadership training programs which stress positive cultural sensitivity of educational leadership would appeal more to Asian-American visible minority females who were seeking a principal position.

Challenges of the Principalship

Research shows that there are many challenges that visible minority female principals encountered once they succeeded in navigating the journey to a principal position. These challenges can be summed up as personal challenges, professional challenges, organizational challenges, race and gender, and language proficiency.

Personal Challenges

Visible minority female principals, like many other female principals, struggled to balance traditional family and leadership roles. Hopkins (2003) talked about the difficulty female principals had in balancing home and career which was also noted by Acker (1999). One participant in Smulyan's (2000) study divorced her husband after four years as a principal because she couldn't find enough time to devote to both her marriage and her career. The Asian-American participants in Pacis' (2005) study all admitted that they had to sacrifice their family life to their principal roles.

Professional Challenges

Two significant professional challenges were talked about in the literature: isolation and loneliness, and stressful job conditions including low salaries.

Isolation and loneliness. Bush et al. (2006), Holtkamp (2002), and Trujillo-Ball (2003) noted isolation and loneliness can affect visible minority female principals in their role as principal. Howard and Mallory (2008) found that professional isolation from their peers was experienced by visible minority female principals when they moved to the principalship. Howard and Mallory believed professional isolation has a negative impact on a school principal's performance at work. The participants in Howard and Mallory's study agreed that the principalship is a lonely place; there is nobody she can rely on, but the whole school relies on her.

Stressful job and low salary. The professional challenges faced by Asian-American principals in Pacis' (2005) study were low salaries and job stresses. The salary paid to school principals did not match their daily heavy work load. In addition, the work of the principals was very stressful. The principals had to assume heavy responsibilities and commit a lot of time to fulfill their role as a principal. The hard part

for them was to satisfy parents and community. In addition, Howard and Mallory (2008) also mentioned that the principals' busy work schedules and stress affected their health. All the participants agreed that exercise was very important to keep in good health, but it was hard to find time to do it.

Organizational Challenges

Smulyan (2000) noted two organizational challenges in her study of female principals. Since females tend to be generally more cautious than males before accepting a leadership position, Smulyan found that this cautious approach is perceived by the system authorities as less than full commitment to the position. On the other hand, Smulyan found that when pushed, selected candidates often were able to overcome external and internal barriers to the principalship. Some participants in Howard and Mallory's (2008) study indicated that the officials and personnel in central office did not understand and support their job as a school principal.

Race and Gender

Mertz and McNeeley (1998), Mogadime (2008), and Smulyan (2000) all stated that race and gender do matter for visible minority female principals as they pursue a principalship or are in their principalships. Russell and Wright (1991) and Gardiner et al. (1999) believed visible minority women may be doubly challenged by the combination of two barriers: gender and race. Sex-role stereotyping is a major challenge for female principals, especially for visible minority female principals (Hopkins, 2003).

The challenges of sex-role stereotyping come from two sources: the educational system and the community. Taylor's (2004) study of African-American women principals noted that African-American women principals face a variety of barriers in seeking to establish their own styles in a leadership capacity. However, in Trujillo-Ball's

(2003) study, participants perceived race was not a problem in the principalship. However, the participants perceived that gender played a role in achieving a principalship.

The notion persists that female school principals are considered to be less capable than males of performing their leadership duties. F. C. Collins (1998), Pacis (2005), and Scinto (2006) found female principals, both visible and non-visible, are questioned about their ability to lead and about keeping discipline and order. Both the community and the school board often perceived female principals as incompetent or lacking all the necessary skills required to lead a school.

Language Proficiency

Language proficiency is a challenge for visible minority principals, especially for those who were born in non-English speaking countries. Based on her study of Asian-American female principals, Pacis (2005) believed that for minority female principals, “being proficient in English was seen as necessary for success” (p. 29). Pacis’ finding confirmed Balakrishnan and Hou’s (2004) finding that language proficiency was seen to be the most critical factor contributing to a positive or a negative integration experience for visible minority people, more important than gender or visible minority status.

The Strategies for Building Inclusive Schools

Mertz and McNeely and Grogan (1999) believed that the current male paradigm describes female leadership as being more caring, nurturing, and empowering than the male approach. However, the leadership styles of visible minority female principals have both similarities and differences when compared with female principals in general. In this section, the attributes which contribute to the visible minority female principals’ leadership and the specific strategies which visible minority female principals used will

be reviewed. The organization of this section covers: (a) attributes and necessary skills, (b) supports received, (c) the contribution of minority status, and (d) specific leadership strategies.

Attributes and Necessary Skills

Pacis (2005) summarized the common characteristics of Asian-American female principals. These include creativity, thoughtfulness, intuitiveness, multi-tasking skills, being a good listener, being able to perceive the needs of the community, speaking a second language, being hardworking and respectful, possessing leadership ability, being well organized, and understanding people from other cultures. Similar skills were also mentioned in Metz and McNeely's (1998) work. Davenport's (2007) study portrayed her participant, a female African-American school principal, as non-hierarchical, inclusive, connected, collaborative, caring, loving to learn, respectful, a team worker, creative, and a change agent.

Supports Received

Personal and professional supports help visible minority female principals to become effective school leaders. Female principals' success requires family support (Gaskins, 2006) as well as networks (Young & McLeod, 2001), mentorships (Pacis, 2005), and school and school board support (Young & McLeod). A number of studies indicated that a strong spiritual faith was also beneficial and supportive to visible minority female principals in their administrative careers (Holtkamp, 2002; Reed-Yeboah, 2007; Turner, 2004).

Personal supports. The family was found to be an important support system for some minority female principals (Conrad & Conrad, 2007; Gaskins, 2006). Family support in Gaskins' study included the participant's husband or partner, parents,

children, relatives, and close friends. Bloom and Erlandson (2003) and Turner (2004) noted that visible minority female principals survived and thrived on a committed dependence and support from family and community.

Hopkins (2003) and Young and McLeod (2001) indicated that family support is very important for a female principal's success. Young and McLeod underscored the spouses' or partners' important support in terms of sharing home responsibilities, and not being threatened by their spouses' or partners' professional success and advancement. Although Pacis' (2005) study of Asian-American principals showed that their families may not support their initial choice to be educators, when these female principals succeeded in their leadership roles, their family members and community felt proud of them and supported them.

The other personal support was spiritual support. Gardiner et al. (1999) and Hopkins (2003) talked about having and needing a spiritual support system that can come from the church, one's husband or partner and children, and close friendships. Openly acknowledging God and their faith, the women felt empowered in the struggle for social justice. Holtkamp (2002) and Turner (2004) wrote about the strength some visible minority female principals derived from their spiritual beliefs and practices.

In her dissertation, Reed-Yeboa (2007) indicated that African-American female principals in her study regarded doing their principal work as doing God's work. Their spirituality kept these visible minority female principals focused on all the children in their schools in the spirit of social justice. Although African-American female principals exhibited different levels of spirituality in their school administrative work, spiritual support played an important role when these female principals faced challenges or when they needed to talk with parents of color.

Professional supports. The other type of support for female principals referred to in the literature is professional. Professional supports mainly included networking and mentoring.

Networking. Holtkamp (2002) and Conrad and Conrad (2007) found that networking was an important type of professional support for female principals. Young and McLeod (2001) and Gardiner et al. (1999) stated networking for female principals, especially those with limited or no experience, had a particularly powerful impact on their leadership roles.

Trujillo-Ball (2003) indicated that *good ol' boys clubs* are still alive, exerting power and influence. Connecting with the *club* can benefit the principal and her school. This supports Holtkamp's (2002) belief that networking can be used as a tool for the construction of the future. However, Howard and Mallory (2008) suggested that lack of time prevents many female principals from networking with others. Scinto (2006) noted the difficulty new female principals have in penetrating the *good ol' boys clubs*.

Mentoring. Pacis (2005) mentioned that mentors played a very important role in the success of Asian-American female school leaders. Scinto (2006) found that although mentors are important for female principals, especially new ones, they are hard to find. Turner (2004) found that there is a great need for mentoring programs for women in general. The principals in Turner's study indicated that matching gender and race would be wonderful mainly because women tend to have a different leadership style from men but it was not always absolutely necessary as there were cases where mixed gender combinations worked quite well.

Organizational supports. Another professional support for visible minority female principals comes from organizational support. Professional development

assistance provided by the school board was found to be of special help to visible minority female principals by providing leadership conferences and training programs. These conferences and training programs assist visible minority female principals to grow in leadership skills and to benefit their teachers, staff members, and students through more effective instructional leadership (Pacis, 2005). Two of the participants in Howard and Mallory's (2008) study mentioned that they received great support from central office, especially from their superintendents.

Minority Status Contribution

One attribute which visible minority female principals have that is not available to other female educational leaders is belonging to a visible minority group. One advantage of being a member of a visible minority for female principals is that other visible minority group members such as staff, students, parents, and community members have or develop a sense of identification with the group leader. They identify with visible minority leaders as role models and perceive that they are understood. Two attributes related to minority status – understanding and being role models – assist visible minority with building inclusive school communities.

Understanding. Lomotey (as cited in Mertz & McNeely, 1998) found having a unique understanding of the students and their community as common characteristics of visible minority female principals. Turner (2004) found that visible minority leaders were more empathetic towards minority group students and used this knowledge to help their students succeed. Pacis' (2005) study showed:

Participants felt that a person's cultural background played an important role in their perceptions as educational leaders and . . . in accepting diverse cultures. The respondents believed that their experience growing up in a minority culture influenced how they responded to situations and people. Their ability to

scrutinize the world through multiple lenses provided them the foundation to better understand and honor diverse cultures. (p. 30)

Being role models. The notion of visible minority role models is recognized as critical in multicultural contexts. Bush et al. (2006) confirmed Carr's (1997), Trujillo-Ball's (2003), and Turner's (2004) earlier findings that visible minority principals serve as effective role models in school because these leaders could understand or empathize with the religious and cultural backgrounds of their pupils. Visible minority principals provide pastoral care with knowledge or empathy of the cultural backgrounds, could deal with and recognize the voice of ethnic minority groups in their community, and could inspire others to aspire to leadership positions by offering a role model. Their minority status provided a feeling of security and comfort for the minority students, and made it easier to connect with students' parents and the community.

Specific Strategies

A review of the limited literature revealed that visible minority female principals used eight strategies in their principalship. These are shared vision and mission, different leadership styles, reciprocal empowerment, ethic of care, communication, listening, networking, and necessary knowledge. The way in which these strategies would be used would depend on the specific school contexts and needs.

Shared vision and mission. The principal's role is to create an inclusive school for diverse students (Riehl, 2000), and to promote diversity (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006). Mertz and McNeely (1998) found that female principals who had a vision for their school and shared this vision with others created a strong culture where the people who worked in the school had a sense of direction and experienced effective leadership. Mertz and McNeely's belief about the significance of shared vision echoed Witmer's

(1995) finding that when everyone in the school organization shares a common vision, each person should not only be inspired and motivated, but also have a clearer sense about how to contribute to the success of the school. In addition, Holtkamp (2002) believed “principals valued personal relationship with students, staff, colleagues, and community members. Women envision their leadership through collaboration, shared problem solving, and shared decision-making . . . and building relationships with others” (p. 14).

Different leadership styles. There are traits that appear to be common to the leadership styles that visible minority female principals use. Conrad and Conrad’s (2007) study of Caribbean female principals found their leadership style featured “networking, flexibility, intimacy, being personable and personal growth associated with transformational leadership” (p. 12).

Pacis’ (2005) study of Asian-American minority principals summed up the following specific leadership styles: “Non-confrontational, non aggressive, the need to be in touch with all issues, leading with few words, hard working, studious, very formal, compassionate, being a global thinker, networking and developing relationships, being a listener, and honoring individuality” (p. 37). Obviously, some of these Asian-American female principals’ leadership styles can also be found in other visible minority female principals’ daily work and in principals’ work in general.

Reciprocal empowerment. The male notion of the relationship between power and leadership as a top-down style is one that female leaders struggle with. Darlington and Mulvaney (2003) wrote, “Power in some ways is a veritable dirty word for women. Power is used regularly against women, and in relation to the self it remains variously unimaginable, unmentionable, and hence unnamable” (p. ix). Mertz and McNeely

(1998) claimed that the female way to lead an organization is in a nurturing, democratic, and empowering fashion. Crenshaw's (2004) study of African-American female principals underscored the importance of empowerment in a female administrator's work.

Crenshaw's (2004) and Davis' (2001) studies mentioned the importance of empowerment in the female way of leading. However, Darlington and Mulvaney (2003) studied seven different minority female principals and described their ways of using power as *reciprocal empowerment* which is a new way of understanding power and empowerment. Traditional views of leadership incorporate the elements of structure, hierarchy, one-way power, obedience, and a top-down approach. Reciprocal empowerment focuses on mutual empowerment. In other words, minority female principals empower their teachers, staff members, students, and community members, at the same time getting empowerment such as different ideas and all kinds of supports from them to empower their administrative job (Acker, 1999).

Ethic of care. An ethic of care is a typical feminine way of leading for female principals (Jean-Marie, 2005). Conrad and Conrad (2007) found of Caribbean women that they expressed their leadership by nurturing and an ethic of care which meant being sensitive to others' needs. For Conrad and Conrad, an ethic of care and leadership are synonymous. In Conrad and Conrad's study, one visible minority female principal commented her leadership style is *taking care of others*. She said, "I must care. Caring is not something you could buy. It is related to your notion of what is spiritual . . . what connects you to the other side" (pp. 5-6). Another female principal said, "Caring is a gift of love which I received from teachers and mentors alike. I was truly cared for, and I cared and still care for my students and protégés" (p. 11). Acker (1999) cautioned us,

however, that, “. . . the predominance of women does not guarantee that a collaborative and caring ‘women’s culture’ will arise, neither does the presence of a few men prohibit it” (p. 116).

Communication. The participants in Pacis’ (2005) study indicated that effective principals need to be good communicators. Principals need to be able to communicate with and understand the diverse needs of their staff members, students, and parents. Pacis’ study confirmed Hill and Ragland’s (1995) statement that communication of information is a skill in which women can and do excel. Communication is considered to be an essential leadership skill for leaders in today’s schools.

Listening. Smulyan (2000) wrote about the importance of listening as a useful leadership strategy. One participant in her study developed her listening skills to collect as much information as possible to make better decisions. One positive result of this was that this provided “others with a safe environment within which to share their ideas and participate in the process of decision making” (p. 80). The study has shown the value of waiting and listening before making a decision. Ovando (2002) acknowledged that listening required patience and skill. She believed that listening was a mutual function between speaker and listener which built a strong foundation to encourage female minority principals by listening to their teachers and students.

Networking. Young and McLeod (2001) noted that networking with other female school administrators is a measure that helps visible minority female principals deal with the daily pressures of the job. Gaskins (2006) and Scinto (2006) mentioned that networking was identified by their participants as a way of bringing more people, especially African-Americans, to a leadership profession. Howard and Mallory’s (2008) study showed most of the female principals built networks with other principals through

their professional organization. Visible minority female principals benefit from the frank conversations with each other through networking.

Necessary knowledge. The last strategy that helped visible minority female principals to build an inclusive school is mastering necessary knowledge, particularly useful knowledge gained in leadership training programs. Hopkins (2003) and Pacis (2005) indicated that the knowledge learned from university leadership training programs assist visible minority female principals to create their own leadership strategies and ways to solve problems. This necessary leadership knowledge and connections with other female principals became important factors to help visible minority female principals with building their inclusive schools. In addition, Pacis' study indicated that strong English language ability also helped visible minority female principals to be successful.

Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter provided an overview of the literature about the visible minority female principalship based on four foundations: the history of the Canadian multiculturalism, and diversity and immigration context, the history of females in education in Canada, educational leadership, and female educational leadership. The history of multiculturalism and immigration contribute to explaining how Canada became a diverse country, and also help us to understand the powerful influence from the colonial period that white Caucasians are superior to other ethnic and cultural groups, as well as the historical roots of the male dominance of Canada's educational system.

Educational leadership becomes more important with the increasing number of immigrants which add to the diversity of Canada's population. In educational leadership practice, transformational and inclusive leadership styles are regarded as the most

appropriate for diverse school populations (Greenebaum et al., 2007; Jason, 2000; Leithwood, 1994; J. Ryan, 2005). As more and more visible minority students, especially immigrants, come to Canada, the need for principals, especially visible minority female principals, who are inclusive and who understand the culture and experiences of the students, is becoming urgent.

Female educational leadership is a more recent and a developing trend in educational leadership. Female leaders in education have tried to build their own leadership strategies, scripts, and models for female educational leaders to learn and to follow. As one part of female leadership, visible minority female leadership has not received a great deal of attention in Canada.

The literature review on visible minority female principalship began with a look at the path to the principalship for visible minority females. The influences and expectations served as the initial step for visible minority females in their pursuit of a leadership position. The second step is related to their abilities and strengths which showed the qualifications for the future principal position. The third step was to conquer the challenges such as family pressures, home and work conflicts, gender and race discrimination, lack of mentors and role models, the negative assumptions, as well as the tokenism which blocked their road to the principalship, and which contributed to visible minority females' lack of confidence and self-esteem when they applied for the principal's position. However, on the path to a principalship, visible minority female principals received many supports. These supports, together with preparatory and training programs, acted as important factors and could assist minority female principals to step into to administration positions.

The literature reviewed next focused on the challenges that visible minority female principals faced in their role as principals. Visible minority female principals faced personal challenges such as role conflict, and job and family conflict. The professional challenges included isolation and loneliness, work stress, and low salary. The organizational challenge for visible minority female principals was establishing a balance between the school and outside world (Pacis, 2005). In addition, gender and race discrimination, and language proficiency were also challenges that visible minority female principals had to deal with.

Finally, the literature review focused on the strategies that visible minority female principals used to build effective schools. Four themes and eight specific leadership strategies were talked about in the literature. Visible minority female principals' personalities and necessary skills demonstrated their ability to perform the role of principal. The supports they received and their minority status contributed to their effectiveness in their leadership roles. The eight specific strategies included having a clear vision, and providing support by networking and mentoring. They use an ethic of care and reciprocal empowerment to strengthen others and in turn receive strength and support. Visible minority female principals also mastered the necessary knowledge related to their position which enabled them to build more effective school.

This chapter served as the background to the researcher and the readers on visible minority female leadership. The next section will introduce the conceptual framework on visible minority female leadership which is based on the literature review done in this chapter.

Conceptual Framework

As this study about visible minority female principalship was based on a limited amount of research available on visible minority female principal leadership, a review of the conceptual framework is necessary to better understand the concepts under study and the relationships among them. Figure 1 presents a model of how these concepts are interrelated and linked together.

The purpose of the study was to describe the administrative work life experiences of visible minority female principals. This study would provide a collection of visible minority female principals' experiences in terms of career path, challenges, and strategies in their leadership position in the Canadian multicultural and diverse context that characterizes Canadian education. The conceptual framework for this chapter positions visible minority female principalship in the center of four related conditions. Visible minority female leadership was first looked at in the past and present Canadian multicultural, diverse, and educational context. Within this context, as the number of visible minority people and immigrants increased rapidly, educational leadership began to emerge as an important issue. Educational leadership is the second condition in the conceptual framework.

Educational leadership needs to utilize leadership styles which work well for diverse school populations. Transformational and inclusive leadership styles were regarded as serving diverse school populations best (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998; Jason, 2000; Tillman, 2002). Transformative and inclusive leadership styles also help to generate new understandings about leadership theory, especially the leadership theory for women and people of color (Tillman; Riehl, 2000).

Female educational leadership is a more recent and a developing trend in educational leadership. Female leaders in education have tried to build their own feminine leadership strategies, scripts, and models for female educational leaders to learn and to follow. Based on the foundation of the other three elements, the center of the framework is visible minority female principalship. Visible minority female principalship was presented by focusing on the path to the principalship, the challenges faced, and the strategies used. The path to the principalship included five aspects: influences and expectations, abilities and strengths, challenges, supports, and preparatory and training programs. The interaction of the five elements as shown in Figure 1 indicates that influences and expectations helped to build the abilities and strengths. The preparatory and training programs enhanced their abilities and strengths, and served as a support. The path to the principalship was influenced by the strategies used.

The challenges of the principalship included personal, professional, and organizational, race and gender, and language challenges. The interaction of the five elements as shown in Figure 1 indicates that language challenges are influenced by race; language proficiency influences and is connected with personal, professional, and organizational challenges; race and gender brought personal, professional, and organizational challenges. The challenges faced determined the strategies that were used.

The four strategies used by visible minority female principals to build inclusive schools were: attributes and necessary skills, supports received, contribution of minority status, and the specific leadership strategies. The interrelationship between and among these four strategies is the attributes and necessary skills, the supports the visible

minority female principals received, and the contribution of minority status are all regarded as the foundation to the specific leadership strategies.

The interrelation among the three aspects of the visible minority female leadership from a broad view can be expressed as both the path to the principalship and the challenges in the principalship influencing the strategies the visible minority female principals used to build their schools.

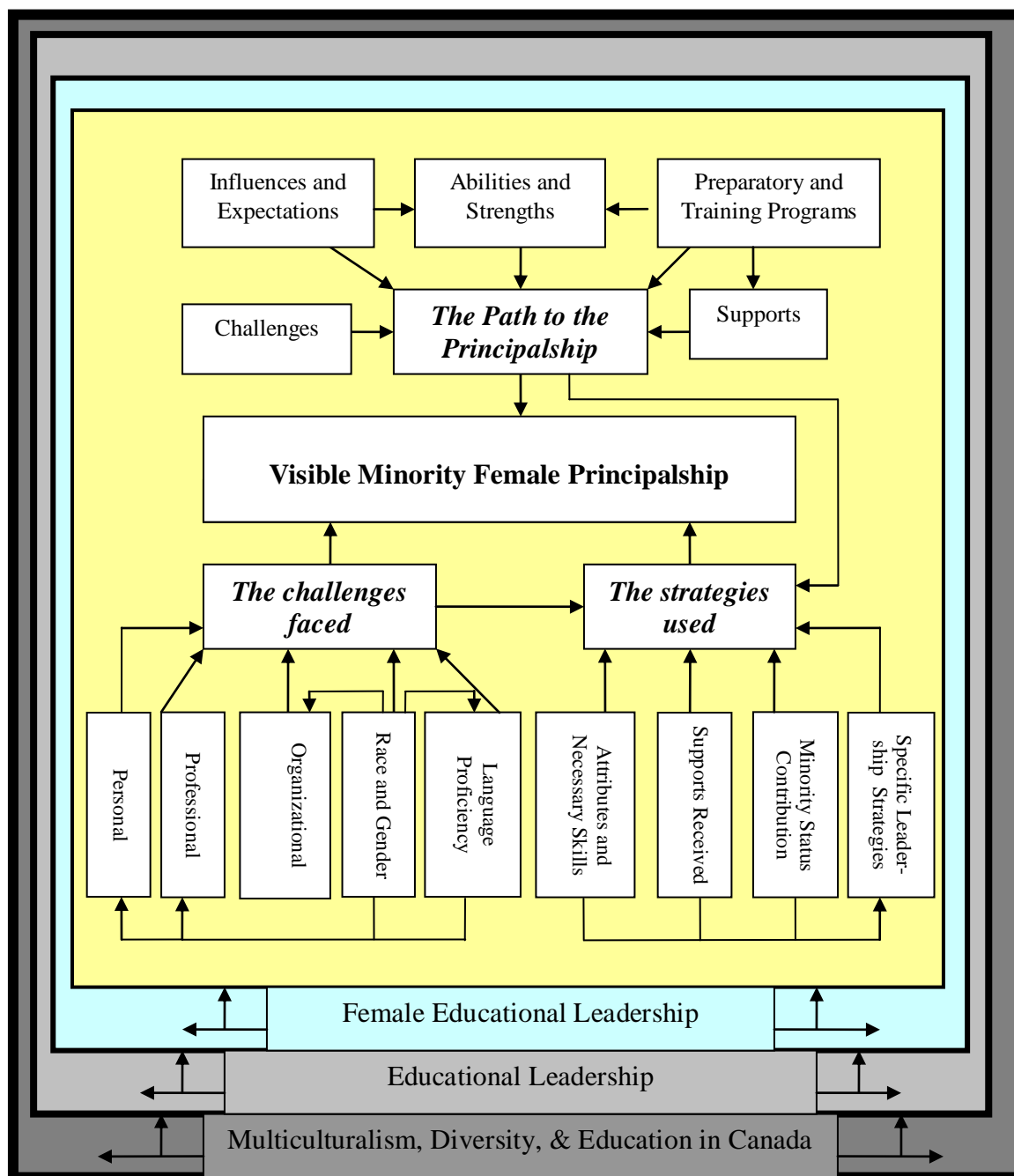


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The goal of educational research and inquiry is to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the wider educational context. The knowledge we gain will serve to enlighten existing conditions; prove, disprove, or add theories in the area of education; caution people about educational matters; and offer suggestions for the future. The notion of disciplined inquiry forms the conceptual background and standard for the design of a study. However, Crotty (2004) suggested, “As a researcher, we have to devise for ourselves a research process that serves our purposes best, one that helps us more than any other to answer our research question” (p. 216).

Keeping Crotty’s (2004) advice in mind, the objective of this chapter is to provide a description of the specific methodological procedures for this study. The purpose of the study and the research questions were set out and the influencing philosophy of the study was introduced. The researcher’s research methods and research orientation selected for this study were provided. The design and the rules of rigor to which the study adhered were outlined. The data collection procedures and data analysis techniques were explained. Finally, the procedures used to maintain trustworthiness and the ethical considerations in this study were identified.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine and describe the administrative work life experiences of the selected visible minority female principals, with a particular focus on the path they took to become principals, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they used to foster inclusive schools. Four objectives were at the heart of this research. First, the study allowed the voices of visible minority female principals to be heard. Second, the barriers to success and acceptance which visible minority female principals experienced could be identified and better understood. Third, readers would situate the leadership styles of visible minority female principals in terms of Canada's current educational context. Fourth, the strategies that contributed to successful administrative experiences for visible minority female principals needed to be identified.

Several research questions provided a focus for the study. The main research question for this study was: How is educational administration experienced from a female, visible minority point of view in the Western Canadian education context? The three sub-questions were: 1) What is the path to becoming a school principal for visible minority females? 2) What are the challenges visible minority female principals experienced in their role as school principals? and 3) What strategies do visible minority female principals use to make their schools more inclusive?

Influencing Philosophy

This study focuses on visible minority female school leadership. Although this study identifies issues of race, gender, and discrimination which might fit in the critical and feminist paradigms, I position myself in the postpositivist paradigm rather than in the critical or feminist paradigm, the reasons for which I have explained in Chapter One. Postpositivists believe, ontologically, that the nature of reality can never be known

completely but only partially. Epistemologically, the researcher is the data collection instrument. Methodologically, qualitative methods, especially the case study, are supported within the postpositivist paradigm (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). The data collection and analysis processes lead to descriptions of patterned behavior that participants use to make sense of their social surroundings (Hatch, 2002; Holliday, 2002).

This study of the work life of visible minority female principals was based on postpositivist foundations. Ontologically, the work life of the participants as reality existed but could never be fully grasped by the researcher. Epistemologically, the researcher served as an instrument to collect the research data by using in-depth interviews, document and record analysis, and a personal reflective journal. Methodologically, a qualitative case study was chosen as the research method to describe and understand visible minority female principals' behaviors and experiences in their school administration life. The collected data were analyzed by narrative and inductive ways which were explained later in this chapter. The result of the study was presented by using narrative case stories first, followed by generalized codes, themes and patterns across the five cases (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, 2000; Hatch, 2002).

Qualitative Case Study Research

Qualitative Research

Research, and specifically qualitative research, can be described in terms of six characteristics. Qualitative research happens in a naturalistic context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), searches for meanings and understandings about the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), is concerned with process in collecting data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), uses inductive data analysis (Merriam, 2002), and presents data by thick description

(Patton, 1990). In addition, qualitative research is an effective way to provide detailed information about small samples (Patton). The six characteristics of qualitative research given above form the foundation of this study. This study explored the work life of five selected visible minority female principals in their school contexts and focused on understanding their experiences from their individual points of view.

Case Study

According to Merriam (1998), Stake (1995), and Yin (2003), the purpose of a case study is to grasp an in-depth understanding of the context and meaning of participants in a bounded system such as a person (student, teacher, principal), a unit (school or community), or a program, and to develop a general statement about the situation by detailed description. Merriam explained that when researchers conduct a study using more than one case, they are conducting multi-case studies within a case study. She noted that the value of multi-case studies is that they can enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings. This case study of the work life of visible minority female principals was a multi-case study, with each of the five visible minority female principals as one case.

Merriam (1998) identified four essential characteristics for a qualitative case study: particularistic, heuristic, inductive, and descriptive. *Particularistic* emphasizes a focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon in the case study. *Heuristic* indicates that the case study helps the readers to understand the phenomenon under study. *Inductive* means to examine the data in a case study to identify themes, patterns, and concepts that may emerge. *Descriptive* stresses that the end product of a case study is a thick description of the phenomenon under study.

The qualitative case study design in this research was based on Merriam's (1998) four essential characteristics. First, the study was particularistic because it focused on five visible minority female principals' administration life in their individual schools and in their particular communities. Each principal was regarded as one case. Second, the study was heuristic in that it allowed the readers to gain some insight into the experiences, challenges, and strategies these principals used in their school administrative work, and helped the readers to make sense of this phenomenon from the participants' own points of view. Third, the case study, especially the multi-case study, allowed the researcher to inductively find similar codes, themes, and categories in each of the five cases, and to make comparisons. And fourth, the case study method was suitable for providing thick description of the work life of five visible minority female principals in this study.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Merriam (1988) stated, "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Participants who can provide information from their experiences that will contribute to the knowledge for this study need to be selected (Creswell, 2002; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Patton, 1990). Because of the small number of visible minority female principals in Canada, and in Western Canada in particular, purposeful sampling was a more appropriate participant selection method than random sampling which works best when a large pool of potential participants is available.

Patton (1990) and Goetz and Le Compte (as cited in Merriam, 1988) identified 17 criteria and strategies for purposeful sample selection. The unique-case approach, defined by Goetz and Le Compte as unique or rare attributes inherent in a population or unusual ethnic composition, was appropriate for this study. This study focused on five visible minority female principals, who together were considered to comprise a unique population.

Using purposeful sampling, the next step was to find participant principals who were members of visible minority groups, and who were females and principals in Western Canadian public school systems. To achieve this goal, I began by sending more than 80 e-mails to different public school systems in four provinces located in Western Canada, asking for their help in identifying visible minority female school principals. Only about one-half of the school systems that were contacted responded, and all but one indicated that they had no visible minority female principals working for them. With the help of personal contacts, I conducted an internet search for visible minority female principals, looking for names that suggested they might be members of a visible minority group in selected Western Canadian school systems.

Having identified five school systems that had visible minority female school principals, I asked permission to do this study in two selected school systems, and asked research personnel in their central offices to recommend schools with visible minority female principals (Appendix C). After I received permission from the school systems to conduct my research and their recommendations of the principals' schools and names, I sent letters to the potential participants to explain the study, and invited them to participate in this study (Appendix D).

After five participants had agreed to participate in the study, I sent them consent forms (Appendix F) to confirm their willingness. When they all had signed consent forms, I provided them with details of the study (confidentiality, the research questions, purpose of the study, data collection, and plans for publication of the final report) and we discussed the dates to begin the interviews. I also asked for documents which I could not locate on their school websites.

Data Collection

Creswell (1998) defined data collection as a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer research questions. In a qualitative study, the data come from people, their artifacts, and their activities, telling their stories, providing explanations for the things they do and the meaning they give to the phenomena in which they engage (Shkedi, 2005). Lincoln and Guba (1985) further explained that unlike quantitative research, the researcher in qualitative research is understood as *human-as-instrument* and is necessarily involved in the research process because of the close involvement with the participants. For this study, the series of interrelated activities of data collection were in-depth semi-structured interviews, document and record analyses, and a reflective journal.

Of the three data collection methods selected for this study – in-depth interviews, document and record analyses, and my own reflective journal – the in-depth interview was the predominant data collection method while the other two methods played a supporting role in gaining a better understanding of the work life of these principals. As Merriam (1998) suggested, using multiple sources for collecting data can yield information to provide a comprehensive perspective and to validate and cross-check the findings.

In-depth Interviews

The interview provides a method to help participants tell their understanding of reality through conversations with the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2002; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The in-depth interview, according to Johnson (2002), “. . . seeks *deep* information and knowledge . . . this information usually concerns very personal matters, such as an individual’s self, lived experience, values and decisions, occupational ideology, cultural knowledge, or perspective” (p. 104). In line with Johnson, Seidman (2006) regarded an in-depth interview as “an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). Johnson emphasized that if the research is focused on personal experiences and only a limited information source is available, in-depth interviewing should be used.

Seidman (2006) created a model for in-depth interviewing in which a series of three separate interviews with each participant are conducted. The first interview focuses on the participants’ life history. The second interview, the most important interview, explores the details of the participants’ experiences related to the topic or area of the study. The third interview focuses on reflection on the meaning of the participants’ experiences. Seidman’s in-depth interview model was used to collect the primary source of data, the participants’ unique narrative stories of their experiences as visible minority female principals in this study. This three-step in-depth interviewing technique allows the researcher to develop a positive rapport with each research participant, encouraging her to share her stories and experiences freely without consequences or the limitations of a set of formalized questions (Fontana & Frey, 1998).

In this study, three separate interviews were conducted. The first interview situated individual participant's experiences in context by asking each woman to tell as much as possible about events and activities in the past prior to her appointment which influenced her decision to pursue a school administrative position. The participants were also asked to narrate a range of constitutive events of their early experiences about their families, schools, university years, and teaching experiences that set them on the path to the principalship in the contextual boundaries of their experiences (Johnson, 2002; Seidman, 2006). Before conducting the first interview, the interview questions (Appendix E) were sent to the participants so that they could have time to sort out their thoughts and prepare themselves to have a meaningful interview.

The second interview was to collect details of the participants' lived experiences in their school principal positions (e.g., the challenges they faced and the strategies they used to build inclusive schools in their daily administrative work). Their responses to the specific interview questions gave details of their experiences which, as Johnson (2002) suggested, offer "multiple views of, perspectives on, and meanings of some activity, event, place, or cultural object" (pp. 106-107). These interview questions were also sent to the participants prior to the second interview.

The third interview focused on asking the participants to reflect on the meaning of their administrative work experiences which was based on the first two sets of interviews. Prior to the third interview, the researcher did further reading to compare the participants' experiences from the first two interviews with the literature in order to identify questions which needed clarification. The third interview also provided participants with an opportunity to provide additional information which they thought they missed during the first two interviews. As with the first and second sets of

interviews, the third interview questions were sent to the participants prior to those interviews. In addition, the following aspects were considered:

Open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were asked in this study (Seidman, 2006). Rather than asking participants to reconstruct a significant segment of an experience, questions about subjective experiences were asked, such as those surrounding the principalship. This type of questioning was used because the focus of this study was on the principals' understandings of their work life. When asked what something is like for them, the participants were given a chance to describe their experiences according to their own sense of what was important. The in-depth interviews were conducted in locations of the participants' choosing.

Interview length and transcripts. The length of each interview was 1 to 1.5 hours depending on the participant's responses and commitment. The three interviews required approximately 4 to 5 hours for each participant, and sending and answering e-mails, telephone calls, and reading the transcripts demanded additional time for each participant from the researcher.

Each participant signed a Consent Form (Appendix F) prior to the first interview. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The interview transcripts were returned to the participants for their reflection. Participants were requested to provide feedback about their transcripts by e-mail, telephone, or as a hard copy. I also sent a Transcript Release Form to all five participants with a prepaid envelop inside asking them to return the signed form. The interview data collection consisted of a total of 15 interviews (12 face-to-face, and 3 by video telephone) and took place between January and April, 2009.

Difficulties. Conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews was not without its difficulties. Setting times to conduct the interviews was challenging because the

participants were busy with their school matters or affairs. Most of the participants lived far from the researcher so arranging flights to meet and interview the participants *was a challenge*. Living in a hotel was an additional difficulty because the participants were required to meet the researcher off-site to comply with the study conditions. In addition, in order to protect the participants' identities, interviews were arranged in locations away from their work places.

Documents and Records

In addition to in-depth interviews, document and record analyses were used to collect data in this study. Hancock and Algozzine (2006) advised case study researchers to review and analyze existing documents and records to gather information related to the research questions. Gall et al. (1996) defined documents as “written communications that are prepared for personal rather than official reasons” (p. 361), while records are “written communications that have an official purpose” (p. 361).

Documents and records are useful in qualitative research because they provide valuable information that can provide clues to help the researcher understand the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2002). Hatch (2002) emphasized that documents and records can help the researcher add to or confirm data obtained from the interviews. Merriam (1988) further explained that the real value of documents and records is that they are easily accessible and available, free, and stable sources of data.

A variety of school documents and records were available online on the participants' school websites. Additional documents were provided by the participants themselves. These documents and records included school improvement plans, professional staff development plans for the year, school newsletters, the principals' professional development plans for the year, and records of school activities.

Reflective Research Journal

Another source of data in this study was the researcher's reflective research journal. A reflective journal, according to Hatch (2002) and Richardson (1998), is a diary or field notes which provide researchers some evidence or clues about the research process, and offer a way to track back the researcher's personal reactions to what is being discovered. Both Hatch and Richardson advised all qualitative researchers to keep a reflective research journal because it provides a record of their reflections on what happened during the research and how they felt about certain matters related to the research. In addition, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) agreed with Creswell (2002) and Merriam (2002) that a reflective journal acts as a kind of collection of reflective field notes which allow for subjective descriptions regarding ideas, feelings, problems, impressions and prejudices within the research.

For this study, the researcher's reflective journal was maintained to obtain additional information about the participants and their leadership activities and experiences as well as the researcher's feelings and impressions. The researcher's reflective journal formed a record of the experiences and events of the study and the researcher's personal subjective interpretations of the research.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis can be explained as a process of providing meanings to findings gained from data collection. Creswell (2007) suggested multi-case study researchers should do two kinds of data analysis: *within-case analysis*, which means giving a rich description of each case, and *cross-case analysis*, which means generating findings across the cases. Based on Creswell's advice, two kinds of data analytic techniques were used in this study: narrative analysis (within-case analysis), using Cortazzi's

(1993) and Richmond's (2002) narrative story map, and inductive data analysis (cross-case analysis), as outlined by Hatch (2002), Merriam (2002), and Miles and Huberman (1994).

Narrative Data Analysis

The narrative analysis structure used to present the data in case studies is very common in qualitative research (Merriam, 1988). Schram (2006) defined narrative analysis as the researcher pulling together events in the data and transforming them into narratives or stories by means of a plot or other narrative qualities. Hendry (2007) agreed with Schram, adding that the researcher constructs participants' lives in two ways: (a) by reducing them to a series of events, categories, or themes by selecting what are considered to be important items in terms of the purpose and research questions of the study, and (b) then putting them back together again to make up a whole called narrative which serves to retell the stories. Creswell (2002) believed that in narrative analysis, the researcher presents a story which is "a chronology of events describing the individual's past, present, and future experiences lodged within specific settings or contexts" (p. 526).

Narrative analysis was used in this study to describe the events and happenings which came from the interviews, documents and records, and reflective journal to produce stories as the outcome of the research (Hatch, 2002; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). To reach an understanding of the work life of visible minority female principals, the narrative data analysis in this study focused on the participants' individual accounts and chronologies of their past and present life experiences, and future intentions using a revised version of Richmond's (2002) story map (Appendix H).

After reading the five interview transcripts separately a number of times, the researcher used narrative analysis to tie together the different streams of each participant's experiences into a meaningful account of that participant's work life. Each of the five stories was analyzed separately in a time line consisting of past experiences, present experiences, and future intentions. Next, the events, categories, and themes that were considered to be important items in terms of the purpose and research questions of the study were selected. Each participant's information was matched to categories or themes on their individual story maps. The five participants' story maps not only helped to do narrative data analysis but also helped to do the inductive data analysis.

The stories of the five participants are presented one by one in Chapter Four. The five participants' stories provide readers with a picture of each participant and help the researcher and readers to understand the participants' personal backgrounds and their work life experiences.

Inductive Data Analysis

Inductive data analysis was also used in this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined inductive data analysis as "a process aimed at uncovering embedded information and making it explicit" (p. 203). Lincoln and Guba talked about two processes involved in inductive data analysis: unitizing and categorizing. They explained that unitizing is a process of coding which transforms and organizes raw data into separate units with related meanings. They defined categorizing as "a process whereby previously unitized data are organized into categories that provide descriptive or inferential information about the context or setting from which the units were derived" (p. 203). Hatch (2002) agreed with Lincoln and Guba about inductive data analysis and stated that inductive data analysis contains the following steps: frame data analysis after reading the data to

give a particular information item a code and keep a record of the relationships between the codes; search for the common categories, patterns or themes across the important meanings of data and their relationships; and finally, create a framework in the data the researcher selected to give a final explanation.

In this study, inductive data analysis was used to help seek the general meaning of the work life of the visible minority female principals across the five cases. The steps to achieve inductive data analysis are illustrated in Figure 2: (a) make open coding concepts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994); (b) build categories and themes (Hatch; Lincoln & Guba; Miles & Huberman; Shkedi, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990); and (c) make comparisons (Creswell, 2002; Strauss & Corbin).

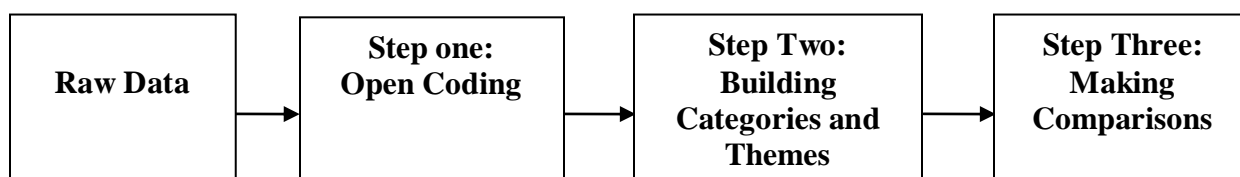


Figure 2. Three-step Inductive Data Analysis. Adopted from Hatch (2002) “Steps in Inductive Analysis” (p. 162)

Open-Coding. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined open-coding as reading through the data and sorting their meanings, then writing down the words or phrases which can cover and describe the data. Bogdan and Biklen recommended eight kinds of codes: setting/context codes (the where or what), situation codes (subject’s worldview), process codes (help to categorize events over time), activity codes (behaviors), event codes (specific activities), strategy codes (methods people use to do things), relationship

and social structure codes (regular patterns of behavior among people), and narrative codes (talk). All eight ways of making codes were used in this study.

Upon completion of the first in-depth interview transcript for this study, the data analysis process began. The first step for the researcher was to read the raw data and identify an important word, sentence, or paragraph (a unit) and then to assign it an open code concept. Creswell (2002) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) referred to open-coding as a form of microanalysis where the data are examined and meanings are assigned to individual words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. The assigned meanings are essentially judgments made by the researcher (A. G. Ryan & Bernard, 2000) based on the literature, the research questions, the researcher's knowledge and experience, and the participants' understandings.

As the researcher read and reviewed the data from all sources many times, highlighted and circled important words, and underlined key phrases and sentences which were believed to represent important ideas, actions, and events, the relationships and connections between and among pieces of data started to become apparent. Miles and Huberman's (1994) advice which is to use sticky labels with short analytical written notes as memos beside the codes to identify the relationship of important pieces of information, and to compare the different pieces of data in order to find commonalities and linkages between them was taken in this stage. While the researcher was reading a transcript and reflecting on the document analysis notes and memos, the questions of what the researcher was learning from each of the participants and what the data were telling needed to be kept in the researcher's mind.

Building categories and themes. Hatch (2002), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Strauss and Corbin (1990) identified building categories and themes as the second step

of data analysis. Categories help the researcher to organize and sort data according to relevant characteristics (Shkedi, 2005). Establishing categories through coding the data and using analytical notes and memos allowed the researcher to find the linkages to various concepts and to identify themes and trends in the data overall (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

After coding the data in the first step of the analysis, the coding concepts were grouped into categories. Analytical notes and memos were used to seek the links between each piece of datum for all the participants. This information in the story map provided the detailed elements which supported each category and theme. Wimmer (2003) advised that the notes and memos be reviewed again and adjustments made both to the memo and its reference in the discussion paper.

Making comparisons. The last step in data analysis in this study was to make comparisons. As data were already analyzed by identifying codes, categories, and themes in each case story map, the researcher began to compare the same codes, categories, and themes again and again (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in the five cases, grouping similar codes and categories to generate the main themes across the cases and noting the ones which were different. Relationships between codes and codes, codes and categories, and categories and categories were observed and recorded on the researcher's self-reminding notes and memos (Creswell, 2002; Shkedi, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Codes, categories, and themes found in each participant's interview and documents analysis were compared with and matched with the other participants to identify similar codes, categories, and themes. Connections, especially the similarities and differences between and among the experiences of the participants, were sought. This constant comparison, consisting of ongoing adjustment and rearranging of the data

units under a high level of scrutiny, allowed all the data units to be placed into an appropriate category (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For those codes and categories which were not the same between the first and second participants, new codes and categories emerged. What the researcher learned from the new emerged codes and categories led to new themes, and provided more evidence and further explanation of the relationships between categories and themes in the discussion of the findings. As the process of data analysis proceeded for the third, fourth, and fifth participants, the process of making comparisons of the codes and categories helped to continually develop a set of categories that provided a reasonable coherence of all the data collected.

In addition to the data analysis, I asked two colleagues to audit the data for themes. We had conversations regarding the data. The conversations with my colleagues provided me with confidence that the underlying themes that I recognized were similar to theirs, and ensured that what I recognized remained true to the data. All data were validated by participant member-checking and accuracy was verified prior to data inclusion in the dissertation. In the last phase of the study, the data auditor, Eric Campbell, a retired member of the Institute of Internal Auditors and Association of College and University Auditors, audited the quotations and paraphrases in the research document to ensure that their interpretations conformed to the narratives given by participants (Appendix I & J).

Following the narrative analysis in Chapter Four, the inductive data analysis was presented in Chapter Five. This served to summarize the general research findings across the five cases of visible minority female principals according to the research sub-

questions. The final research results and discussion were presented in the last chapter – Chapter Six – of the dissertation.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the overall quality of the research. Trustworthiness is the ability to persuade an audience that the results of a study are important, relevant and worth paying attention to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As Arksey and Knight (1999) stated, “Readers want to know that research has been carefully done, so that findings can be trusted” (p. 49). Lincoln and Guba approached trustworthiness by asking two related questions:

How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth looking at? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue? (p. 290)

Lincoln and Guba viewed trustworthiness from four aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability within naturalistic (qualitative) criteria. Three criteria – credibility, transferability, and conformability – were used to affirm the trustworthiness of this study.

In this study, the aspect of dependability was not applied. Shkedi (2005) talked about dependability as replication, how easily and accurately a study can be repeated and yield identical results. A study is dependable if other studies are able to produce the same results when the same procedures are utilized. Because this study looked at five unique participants drawn from a very small pool of possible participants, it would be unreasonable to assume or conclude that identical results could be obtained from another similar study using identical methodology.

Credibility

Credibility relates to the truth value of a study and its findings, and corresponds to the conventional notion of internal validity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Credibility has to do with the study's accuracy (Borg & M. D. Gall, 1989), and provides the connection of how the data received reflect the reality from which they came (Polkinghorne, 1997). Credibility in this study was established in two ways: triangulation and member checking.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined triangulation as more than one source of information needed to establish the facts of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Stake (2000) also suggested using triangulation to maintain the credibility of the study. In this study, the literature review of the work life of visible minority female principals constituted one component of the research data. In-depth interviews and transcripts provided another perspective. Document and record analysis acted as an additional component to aid in adding credibility. The personal reflection journal tracked back the data to their source to make sure the results of the research were credible.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described member checking as the evaluation of the researcher's analytic categories, descriptions, and conclusions by those participants from whom the data were originally collected. In other words, the interview transcripts in this study were returned to the participants and they were encouraged to comment upon terms, ideas, and findings. At the conclusion of the member checking process, the participants were asked to sign transcript release forms (Appendix G).

Transferability

Transferability relates to the applicability of a study. Transferability replaces external validity in the conventional perspective (Merriam, 2002; Seale, 1999), and

refers to the extent to which the results of one research are applicable to other situations (M. D. Gall et al., 1996). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) cautioned that the similarities and differences between research sites, participants, and other related elements of the research contexts determine the possibility of transferability from one study to another or more.

The transferability of the results of this study is possible to a limited extent only. In this study, transferability is achieved by providing a narrative of the participant's stories so that readers are able to decide on the applicability of the findings to other visible minority female leaders or their school contexts. In addition, the researcher provided a final report outlining the similarities and difference of the participants' experiences to ensure that the readers of this report understood this study as well as they could, and are able to meaningfully relate these findings to their own situations and contexts. Finally, taking Miles and Huberman's (1994) advice, suggestions for further study based on the research results were provided to the readers to achieve transferability.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of a study in terms of its procedures, orientation, and methodology. Lincoln and Guba (1994) emphasized that confirmability assesses the accuracy of the data rather than the aim of the inquirer. Leininger (1985) argued confirmability was to "obtaining direct and often repeated affirmations of what the researcher has heard, seen, or experienced with respect to the phenomenon under study" (p. 105).

A number of strategies were employed to ensure the confirmability of this study. First, multiple methods of data collection served as an audit trail, and assisted with the

recording of data and accurate description of the participants. Second, a narrative approach was used to tell the participants' stories in their own language and understandings. Third, during the data analysis, the researcher allowed the participants, through narrative stories, to *speak for* themselves. In addition, peer reviews, in which the data were discussed with colleagues, were also conducted. The trustworthiness of this study met the criteria of credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved personal information so ethical principles were adhered to when conducting the research and reporting the data. Ethical guidelines were followed to ensure all participants in this study were treated with respect. Because the cultural backgrounds of the participants in this study were different from that of the researcher, the researcher made an attempt to be sensitive to and respectful of the participants' cultural values. Before proceeding with data collection and analysis, permission to conduct the study was requested and was obtained on December 8, 2008 from the Behavioral Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan. Ethical information and letters of approval are included in Appendices A and B.

Each participant in the study received a Consent Form (Appendix F) which outlined the study's objectives, participants' roles, data collection procedures, the in-depth interview times, and the audio recording of interviews. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw at any time without fear of penalty. Consent forms were completed by each participant prior to the collection of data.

Pseudonyms were used in this study to protect and to attempt to maintain the confidentiality of the participants, their schools, school boards and school divisions,

personnel, as well as the geographical locations of the participants. The five participants came from different countries and regions in Asia so in order to protect their anonymity they were all deemed to be Asian-Canadian. The participants worked in Western Canadian public elementary and high schools. The five visible minority female school principals were given the pseudonyms Ann, Betty, Carol, Darlene, and Eva.

The participants were provided with the transcripts of their portion of the report for review to ensure the accuracy of the text. All data were stored in a secure space within the researcher's office until completion of the study. These data will be maintained for a period of five years in a secure place in the university after which time the data will be destroyed.

Overview

Figure 3 presents an overview of the research design that was used in this study.

It served to give the reader a graphic view of the study as described in this chapter.

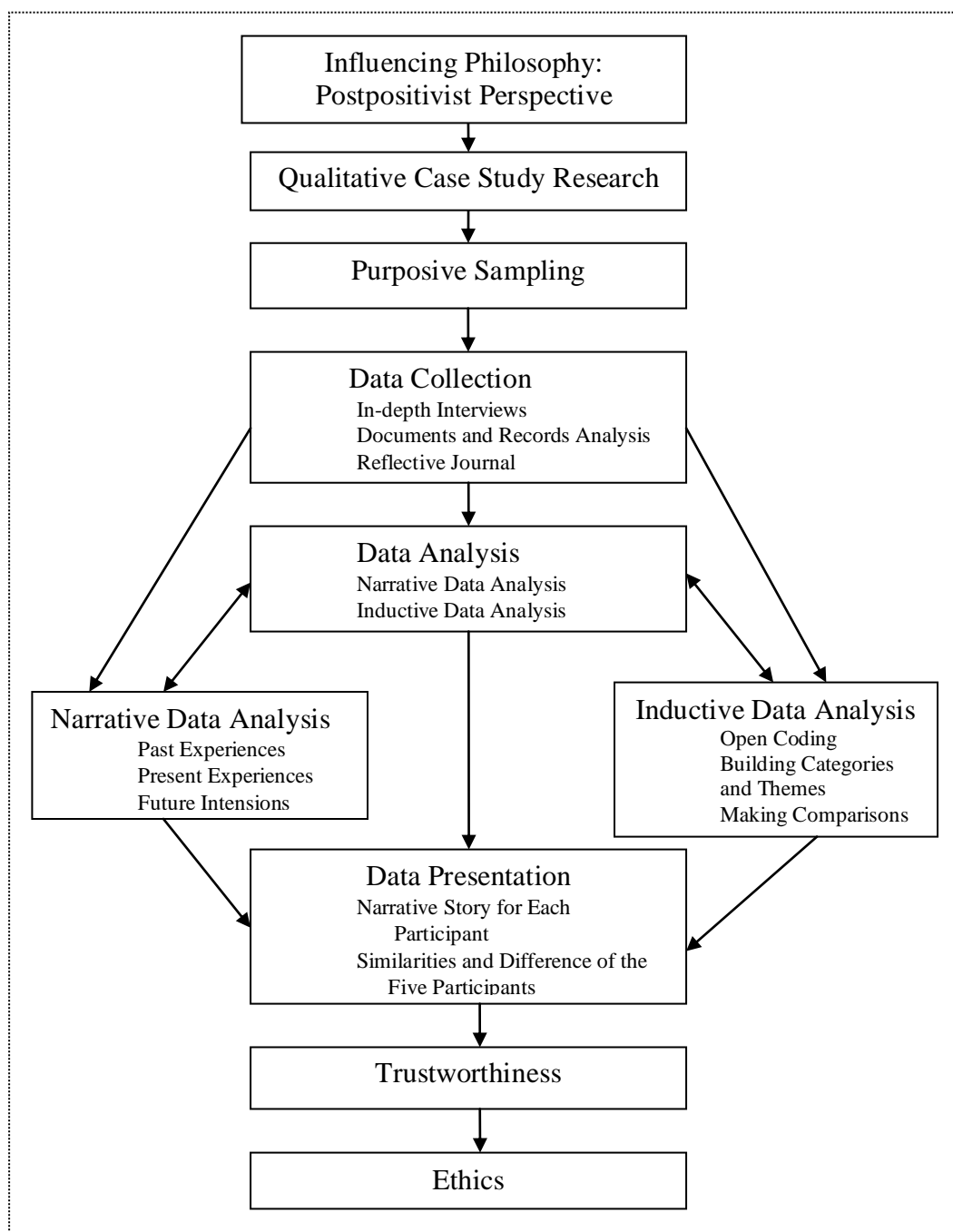


Figure 3. Overview of Research Design

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the research design (Figure 3) employed in this study. The purpose of the research was to examine and describe the administrative work life experiences of the selected visible minority female principals, with a particular focus on the path they took to become principals, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they used to foster inclusive schools. Therefore, it was appropriate to adopt a qualitative case study orientation to this study. The data collection in this study included in-depth interviews, document and record analysis, and the researcher's personal reflective journal. Narrative analysis was used to organize the five cases about these visible minority female principals' administrative work life into five separate stories first, then inductive analysis focused on the similarities and differences of the identified codes, categories and themes across the five cases of the visible minority female principals' administrative work life experiences.

The trustworthiness of this study was based on credibility, transferability, and conformability. In addition, techniques such as triangulation of the data, member checking, an audit trail, and peer reviews were also used to establish the trustworthiness of this study. Ethical guidelines were followed to attempt to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STORIES ABOUT VISIBLE MINORITY FEMALE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the administrative work life experiences of the selected visible minority female principals, with a particular focus on the path they took to become principals, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they used to foster inclusive schools. The work experiences of these five visible minority female principals were formed by their cultural background, heritage, family influences, and personal lived experiences. In order to understand the visible minority female principals' work life, it was necessary to hear what I was told, who they believed they were, their past experiences, and how past experiences influenced their present experiences and their future intentions.

This chapter provides the stories of the five principals based on a revised version of Richmond's (2002) narrative analysis story map which included past experiences, present experiences, and future intentions. The five participants, who worked in five different Western Canadian public schools, were all deemed to be of Asian-Canadian heritage. Each participant's experiences were introduced and retold in each case story in this chapter. The five principals were assigned the pseudonyms Ann, Betty, Carol, Darlene, and Eva to protect their anonymity and to maintain confidentiality. As well, every effort has been made not to reveal or identify the city, school system, schools,

province, and personnel who work in these five schools and school systems. For the purposes of reference, Ann will be shortened to A; Betty to B; Carol to C; Darlene to D; and Eva to E. In addition, in the citations, interview = I, and document = D. The organization of this chapter is that Ann's case story will be presented first, followed by Betty, Carol and Darlene, and finally Eva. A short introduction is presented before the story is told in each case.

Ann's Case Story

Who is Ann?

Ann is the principal in a Western Canadian public high school which has only recently been opened. There are about 950 students, and 65 teachers, administrators, and support staff in her school. The school is located in a middle class neighborhood of the city.

Ann self-declared herself to be a female school principal but not necessarily a visible minority female principal. She is Asian-Canadian. Ann is married to a Caucasian of Irish heritage. They have two daughters. Ann is in her early fifties. Ann regards herself as a very flexible person; she respects others, is very supportive, has a clear philosophy of education, is a mediator; and she likes to have fun, laughs a lot, has the confidence to make consistent decisions, and is an experienced administrator.

Past Experiences

Family background. Ann was born in Asia. Soon after she was born, her family and her uncle's family moved to Africa where they lived for six years. In 1963, her uncle's family, together with her family, moved to Canada because Ann's father and her uncle both found teaching positions in Western Canada. Ann has been in Canada for 45 years. She has one brother and one sister. Ann's father was a humanities and English

teacher. Ann's mother chose to stay at home to look after Ann and her siblings when they were young. In Ann's eyes, her parents were very tolerant, lovely, and adventurous people. Unlike other Asian families, they did not control their children tightly such as choosing a career in medicine or law, or marrying someone from the same Asian culture. They just wanted Ann to be happy. Ann believed her parents did a good job of educating her, and helped her to become today's Ann.

Childhood. Although Ann had a happy childhood, she admitted that she was a very rebellious kid and brought a lot of tension to her parents when she was a teenager. She said:

I was pretty wild and I wanted to party and drink and smoke and you know have white boyfriends and all that kind of thing . . . and of course for an Asian girl to do any of those things they just weren't used to that. So it was very difficult for them [parents]. (A. I. p. 4)

The community in which Ann's family lived in Western Canada was quite small and people were very friendly to them. Because Ann's family was the only Asian family in the community, people were full of curiosity toward them. Ann had never experienced any racist or negative problems. Her friends, before she went to university, were all white. Ann wore the same kind of clothes as her friends wore and spoke the same language as her friends did, and without an accent. Ann had decided at an early age that she would not regard herself as an Asian female, but just as a female.

School years. Ann's elementary school experiences were good. The only hard part for her was to make friends because her father changed job locations many times. Making friends became very important for Ann and, fortunately, she made friends very easily. As the only Asian girl at school, Ann did not encounter many negative experiences except sometimes in the playground. Some students would make some

hurtful comments about her skin color but she decided very early that she wasn't going to be influenced by this kind of thinking.

Ann did not like her high school years because it was a little more difficult to make friends. Ann explained the reason for her difficulty in making friends was that she wasn't an athlete, and she wasn't in the band or anything liked that. But she did a lot of social things with a group of friends and she drank and smoked at that time. Her marks weren't good. Ann's father decided to send her to Africa to visit her relatives when she finished Grade 11. Her father wanted her to see a bigger world and, unlike her friends, find some ambition in life. Ann didn't come back to Canada for her Grade 12 year. Instead, she did some of her Grade 12 courses by correspondence and came back home after finishing Grade 12. Ann believed that this trip was a good eye-opener for her because she began to have a goal – to go to university – but she wasn't sure at that time what she was going to study.

University years. Ann started university in Arts and Science right after she finished her Grade 12. She wasn't really interested in school until she went into Education. Ann liked her university years, especially the last years. She planned to become a counselor rather than a teacher because she thought she could be a good counselor for those students who, like herself, didn't enjoy high school. However, Ann didn't go back for a counseling degree after she got her teaching certificate with a major in psychology and a minor in English. Instead, she began her teaching career, married, liked teaching, and found it was a good fit for her.

Teaching experiences. Ann had 14 years of classroom teaching experience. She mostly taught English Language Arts in high schools (Grades 9-12), Grade 9 Math and English in her first year of teaching, and a little bit of drama as well. She became quite

involved in the English Language Arts curriculum, especially after she got a Master's degree in Curriculum. She also took on leadership roles at her school. She was a department coordinator for English for several years, and she also wrote the first assessment document for the provincial government. She did some work with the provincial teachers' federation with accreditation seminars. She was invited to teach some courses at a university. She also was the president of the English Teachers' Association for the provincial teachers' federation for a short time. She felt that she wanted to do something out of the classroom. Then she applied for a vice-principal position, but didn't get it the first time. She applied a second time and was successful.

Administrative experiences. Ann was a vice-principal for eight years in two different high schools. Her duties as a vice-principal were scheduling, discipline, and supervising teachers. She was teaching at a university as well. Ann recalled that in her first vice-principalship, the student population in her school represented different cultures. She remembered one student whose mother was a Filipino and father White. This student had discipline problems. He was quite wild, and he fought and got involved in drugs as well. The boy's mother phoned Ann one day and accused her of being racist to her son. Ann felt hurt at that time because, being a member of a visible minority herself, the issue had nothing to do with race; it was a discipline issue. Ann believed one has to treat people equally but it doesn't necessarily mean the same. Ann did some reflection after this mother complained about her because she believed that "sometimes just because I'm a visible minority doesn't mean that I can't be racist either . . . I mean it's possible that . . . I might have had some prejudices against . . . you know, I don't think at that time I did" (A. I. p. 10).

After eight years at one school, Ann was transferred to another high school as vice-principal for four years. She took one year off because she developed an illness. When she recovered she went back to school to do a part time vice-principal job. Subsequently, Ann applied for a principal position and got it.

Ann worked as a principal in her first high school for three years. She took over a retired female principal's position so she did not need to worry about the female part because the community already accepted a female principal. It didn't take long before Ann quickly became a part of that community. She had a very good support staff. Ann recalled that she took off two days for a medical annual check-up. On the day when she returned to school there was a pep rally at the school which the staff had planned but about which she knew nothing. Her husband and two daughters were there and they had a big cake in the staff room and all day long different people from the system came, different principals, different vice-principals, and the students sang songs for her. At that moment, Ann sensed that the staff liked her and accepted her as a principal whom they liked.

During this period of her principalship, Ann had students from a few different cultures. She remembered one student's father, a doctor who was of Muslim origin, who came to school asking Ann for help. The father believed his sons received some discrimination in the elementary school they were attending. Ann helped him with that situation by contacting the principal of his son's school and explaining the father's concern to the principal. For the first time Ann felt that being a principal and from a different culture really helped in this kind of situation. As well, Ann's Asian community considered her achievement in becoming a high school principal as a great accomplishment and the community invited her to talk about careers to the community

people. Ann believed that teaching was not perceived as a good profession from the Asian people's point of view, but a high school principal position was regarded as a great achievement, and her Asian community was proud of her to get this far.

Present Experiences

School setting. The school in which Ann is a principal now is a high school. She was appointed principal of the school in 2005. At that time the school was just starting to be built. She helped to plan the school construction, recruited staff members, and enrolled the Grade 9 and Grade 10 students. The school formally started in the fall of 2006. This is Ann's fourth year working at this school.

A typical day. Ann is extremely busy every day. For example, she came to school one morning and her daughter's medical specialist phoned and asked Ann and her daughter to come to his office at noon. Ann had a meeting with a parent at 10:45 a.m. and a meeting with a superintendent at lunch time. Ann phoned the superintendent and said she could still do the meeting but had to leave at twenty to twelve. She did a little bit of work, met with the office staff for the weekly Monday meeting, and met with the parent and the superintendent. At twenty to twelve, Ann left to go to the doctor's office with her daughter. At one o'clock she brought her daughter to her school and, then, returned to her own school for a class. Ann went to a funeral that afternoon and returned to school until 6:00 p.m. She went home for supper and then came back for basketball games.

Ann's thoughts. Ann said she had never thought of herself as a visible minority female principal, but just a female principal. She did think a lot about gender things because when she became a vice-principal and principal, there were very few females in that role in the high school system (three out of ten). Ann was proud of being a female

and getting a *male-dominated* position. Being a principal, Ann doesn't think race and ethnicity brought her any inconvenience or negative experiences. Ann believes that once people know you and respect your work, minority status is not an issue.

Ann has always been very much a part of the mainstream community. With a husband of Irish origin, her daughters half Asian, half Irish, she does not have a lot to do with the Asian community although she is still part of it. However, Ann believes that her visible minority status makes her more sensitive to the students and parents from other cultures, and helps her understand the context better. As a result, she sometimes doesn't see things the same way as other female principals do. Ann strongly believes that minority female principals are more culturally sensitive than perhaps those from the mainstream, majority culture.

Ann has been a role model for her Asian community. Although she is proud of her Asian heritage, she doesn't consider herself to be a visible minority and she advises visible minority people not to use visible minority as an excuse for *bad luck* because one never knows if something that has happened to you is because of your minority status or because of the person you are. If everything is reduced to minority status, one can become a bitter person. Ann decided, “. . . I'm going to just do the best job I can and hopefully that will get me the job I want” (A. I. p. 12). Ann assumes that when people see her, they might say she is an Asian, but they will never say she isn't qualified. Ann is full of confidence with her position. She feels good about her career and very proud of her school.

Future Intention

Ann has completed 30 years as an educator. She believes that she has done what she set out to do. She thinks this is a good end to her career and she is thinking of

retiring at the end of this term. She would like to do some volunteer work or something not so stressful in the future. If she had not been ill, she might have applied for a superintendent position or some other central office position.

Betty's Case Story

Who Is Betty?

Betty is a principal in a Western Canadian public primary school. The school has a 51-year history. There are 190 students from Pre-kindergarten to Grade 8, and 34 teachers, administrators, and support staff in her school. The community in which her school is located is not in a high socio-economic area. Betty self-declared as a female school principal but, like Ann, not necessarily as a visible minority female principal. Betty is married to her second husband who is Caucasian. She has three children with her first husband who was also Caucasian. She is in her early fifties. Betty regards herself to be a very inclusive, democratic, and understanding person. She listens. She is patient, friendly, *a people person who cares about people*, and enjoys children. She has a strong personality, makes hard decisions, likes challenges, is a team player, has a sense of humour, and is knowledgeable and experienced.

Past Experiences

Family background. Betty was born in Asia. When she was one year old, her family moved to England where she started school. When she was nine years old, her family moved back to Asia for two years, and returned to England. When Betty was 13 years old, the family moved to Canada. Betty has been in Canada since 1971.

Betty has one brother. Her father was a doctor and her mother was highly educated but chose to stay at home to look after Betty and her brother and make sure they had a good upbringing. Betty's parents had high expectations for the children and

they moved several times to ensure that their children would have a good life. The family always did everything together. In Betty's eyes, her parents were open-minded and lovely people.

Childhood. Betty spent her childhood in England in a racially-biased community. She received a lot of racist comments because she was a visible minority. Betty believed that people made fun of her simply because they didn't understand that there was something unique in different cultures. Her experiences in England made her decide that if she was ever in a situation like that, she would not act that way. She wanted everyone to feel comfortable and belong, no matter where they came from. When Betty moved to a small farming town in Western Canada with her family, people were very respectful and very accepting and it was completely different from the way she was treated when in England. She also thought that was partly because her father was a family doctor.

One enjoyable experience in Betty's childhood was driving through Europe on the way back to her home country in Asia with her family. She got the chance to visit the Eiffel Tower, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Berlin Wall, and Venice. In her travels, she had the opportunity to see different cultures.

School years. Betty had school experiences in three countries. When she was in England, school was fine for her. She did her work and she was a good student. However, she thought the teachers in England probably weren't aware of, or simply didn't understand, the types of difficulties that children of colour have so they didn't, in her mind, do enough to support visible minority students. When she moved back to Asia with her family for two years, she went to an English-speaking school. The school experience for Betty in this period was that she really felt she didn't belong to that

culture. When Betty's family moved back to England again for another two years, Betty's feeling about her school experience was the same as it had been in her home country; she didn't belong to this culture either. She found there was no real place for her.

When Betty was 13 years old, her family moved to Canada. She spent her high school years in two different schools in two Western Canadian cities. During high school, Betty studied very hard and she did well. She was an avid reader in high school, and often went to help an elementary teacher by reading to her young pupils. Helping young children and reading to them was one of the things that she loved to do in her high school years. Betty found the teachers in her high schools were respectful and very supportive, but she was not sure how much the teachers were aware of the bullying and the covert racism that was prevalent. The experiences she received in the schools she had attended and the communities in which she had lived shaped and influenced her to become the person she is today.

University years. University years were great for Betty. She was really impressed with how the university was welcoming to students of all different faiths and cultures. She made many really good friends and she found the people wonderful and accepting of different cultures. Betty was really interested in the areas of psychology and sociology. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree and then took a couple of years off because she got married and her husband was going into Commerce. She tried a number of times to get into Education. She eventually got her Bachelor of Education degree in Early Childhood. Later she received a Master's degree in Educational Administration from the same university. This is also where she met her first husband.

There is one university experience that Betty remembers well. When she applied to study Education, she was interviewed by the Dean of the College of Education in the university in which she studied. The dean at that time had never seen or spoken to her before, but she guessed that he thought she was a newly-landed immigrant because when he spoke to Betty in the interview, he spoke quite slowly as if Betty didn't understand English. The dean told her that there were lots of other things that she could do, and that probably Education was not the career for her. Betty thought that was maybe her first experience of bias at the university. It made her more determined to get into a career in Education although her father expected her to go into Medicine or Law. Betty would like to meet the dean today and show him what she has achieved.

Teaching experiences. Betty started to teach in an inner city school in a Western Canadian city, first as a substitute teacher and then, within a couple of months, she got a contract to teach Kindergarten in an inner city school. She loved this job because the staff displayed incredible teamwork and the children represented different cultures. Betty has taught for twenty-one years. She has actually taught everything from Kindergarten to Grade 8. From Kindergarten to Grade 5 she taught all the subjects and then in Grade 8, she taught language arts, social studies, health and lifestyles, and career education. After Betty taught for almost 10 years, the principal at one of her schools encouraged her to go into administration. At that time in order to be a vice-principal, she had to have at least started her Master's degree so Betty began her graduate studies. She applied for a vice-principalship three or four times before she finally got one.

Administrative experiences. Betty has been a vice-principal for six years in two different primary schools. In her vice-principalship, the schools she worked in had many students who were from poor socio-economic areas. The students worried about food,

clothing, shelter, and abuse issues. Betty became a principal after six years as a vice principal. Her first principal position was in a primary school where the children and their families were also from low socio-economic areas. She was there for half a year. Then she was transferred to another primary school as principal for three years. The children from this community were more affluent.

Present Experiences

School setting. Betty has been in her present school as a principal for nearly two years. There are 190 students in her school. The students come from families with limited financial resources and most of the parents in her school area aren't home owners.

The benefit of minority status. In her present position, Betty thinks that her brown skin has made it easier for her to communicate with First Nation, Indian, or Pakistani families. During parent-teacher conferences, Betty noticed that newly immigrant parents from Bengal and Pakistan preferred to come and talk with her because they sensed and felt a closer attachment. This made her vice-principal, who is a white male, complain about reverse discrimination against him. Betty explained to him that, at this time, these parents are more comfortable with and want to be with people of their own colour or culture. Betty thinks perhaps being a visible minority principal has been an asset for her.

Betty claimed that her status as a visible minority female principal made her work a little bit harder than other female principals. She used to think she had to be better than others to get a certain position, otherwise, she did not fit in the mainstream. She is proud of her accomplishments and the things she has gone through to get this far.

She thinks people respect her because she is not just mainstream. However, she admitted that it took a long time for her to get to this point.

Betty's thoughts. Betty believes that she has been shaped by all her experiences from childhood, youth, the College of Education, and the Dean. These experiences have made her want to be respectful of everybody and all cultures. She didn't know that she always wanted to be a principal until her principals told her that she had the qualities of making a good principal. Once Betty got into a leadership position, she became more focused on leadership. People told her that she had a knack for it and that she did a good job. Betty loves her present job. She thinks she has the best of all worlds because if she wants to teach, she can go into any classroom. If she doesn't want to teach, then she does administrative work and supervision. The students in her school are wonderful and staff members are supportive. She likes being in a school where there's not just one culture, but a variety of cultures because she thinks that's what makes life interesting and rich and exciting.

Betty thinks that she is a fighter. Growing up with a lot of bias and prejudice and being bullied has made her mind more open to what makes people *tick*. She guesses that she is a bit of a Pollyanna because she wants everyone to live happily ever after, but she has enough common sense to know that that's probably not going to happen. Her work has been shaped by the experiences that she has gone through on the long way from school to university to her own family. She wants to make sure that wherever she goes, she does a very good job and tries to include all students. She looks out for those children who have been bullied or picked on because of colour or race and tries to help those students along so that it's easier for them.

Future Intention

Betty would like to be a superintendent of education in the future. She has applied for a superintendency a couple of times but wasn't successful. She doesn't think that is because she is a woman of color. She will continue to apply, but she said that her plans may change five years from now. She has a new husband and a great family, and five years from now she may decide she doesn't want to put that time in any more. She might just be happy doing what she is doing without having to learn a new role because when a person changes a job, there's always a learning curve, and it always takes time. She also guesses that, in five years, she will probably wonder if it's going to be worth her time to put in two or three years when she could possibly retire and travel. That looks good for her, too.

Carol's Case Story

Who Is Carol?

Carol is a principal in a Western Canadian public elementary school. The school has a 30-year history. There are around 150 students from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 7, and 13 staff members in her school. Her husband comes from the same Asian ethnic background as Carol. They have two children. She is in her late forties. Carol identifies herself with the mainstream Canadian culture. Carol claims to be a very altruistic person, and always tries to make a difference and create a wonderful learning environment for her students and her staff. She is a good listener and it's easy for her to have empathy for children, to have fun with them, to understand them, to listen to them, and to connect with them. Carol also connects with the staff and the parents, and supports them. She has the capability to motivate people, to work hard at the school, and to make tough decisions. She has a sense of humour and often thinks of the bigger picture. She has a

background in languages and technology, multiple intelligences, and effective assessment, and she knows how to make learning fun and engaging for the class.

Past Experiences

Family background. Carol was born in Asia. She is the youngest of three children in her family. When she was one year old, her family came to Canada where she has lived for 47 years. Although her ethnic background is Asian, she has always felt that she is Canadian. Both Carol's parents were teachers. She is a fourth generation educator. The family traveled quite a bit because her parents always wanted the best of cultural experiences for their children.

Childhood. Carol's family moved to Canada in 1962. Her memories of her childhood are that she didn't have a lot of toys; instead, she had a lot of books. She often borrowed books from the library and returned them back on time. As a teenager, she volunteered in a hospital. Carol played piano and clarinet, and music was a huge part of her childhood life.

School years. As a child of an Asian family, Carol knew from a young age that if she had a 95 average in school, it was not good enough for her parents so she didn't bother to try. Carol always thought she was smarter than her teachers when she was an elementary student and that was a big downfall for her. Carol did not enjoy just sitting in rows and opening her brain, letting teachers pour information in, and then closing her brain with no input from her. She wished that teachers knew how to encourage students such as when the smartest students in the room raise their hands, the teachers knew how to validate them. When a child can't sit still, the teachers would know and ask him/her to stand up and walk around to do the work in a special way.

Carol found it to be very frustrating as a student at that time and sometimes she would speak up. She thought that her teachers didn't know what to do with her, but they also did like her because she wasn't obnoxious but just off-task a lot. She thought she couldn't be bothered to pay attention, and she also wanted to fit in with her peers so badly so she completely limited her vocabulary and made sure she got Cs. It really was a difficult thing for her parents to understand, because she did show a lot of promise. Her parents' reaction was to send her to school in England.

She went to boarding school in England for two years when she was seventeen and she thought this was a really huge turning point for her. The school that she went to was in London, England, and it had students from all over the world. It was the first time that she had been in a multicultural environment and enriched atmosphere and it was there that she learned to love learning. She had terrific teachers who were passionate about their subjects and she really learned to strive to learn for the sake of learning. One thing Carol learned from her experience in England was that if a teacher gave a child responsibility, an opportunity to be a leader, then the child would live up to those expectations. Because Carol was a little bit older than the others, she was given so much responsibility it influenced her greatly. She became a very responsible and capable human being. Even though she wasn't really well prepared to do the A level exams at the end of the term, she passed the exams and was accepted at an American university.

As Carol grew up, motivation became a huge factor for her. She really believed that children need to be involved in their learning and stimulated to learn through song, dance, art, visual aids, and through oral creativity. Carol believed there are so many little ways a teacher can make children feel successful. Carol also wished that in those days the teachers had been able to say to children that they could be whatever they wanted to

be. Carol believed that her only option was to be a teacher because her parents were teachers, and her teachers were teachers, and she didn't see Asian people on TV or in any other venue.

University years. Carol's university years were fabulous. When she was leaving England to go to the US, she was warned that people just don't treat coloured people very well in the States. However, she went to the Midwest of America and it was a really interesting experience for her because although the white people were a little bit prejudiced toward black people and Hispanics, Asians were held up as being maybe *above* the population because most of the Asians in the States were professionals so it was just expected they would be at a different echelon of society. The other interesting thing was that the white people were not prejudiced against her, the black people were not prejudiced against her, and neither were the Hispanics so she had an ideal environment where she had friends from every group. The university years in America were really a wonderful experience for Carol.

When Carol came back to Canada, she did her teacher training and finished her degree at a university in Western Canada. In the middle of her teacher training, she got married. She returned to her Asian home country for nearly a year with her husband. Interestingly enough, she was really not well suited to the culture because she could not speak the language comfortably but she gained an understanding of how families work. Carol finished her teacher training when she came back from Asia.

Teaching experiences. Carol started working as a teacher in 1988. She taught in an elementary school for about 15 years. She also taught French in a Western Canadian university for two years. She taught French from Grade 2 to Grade 7 in elementary schools. When she was a vice-principal later, she also was teaching French to six classes

of Grades 5 and 6. It was really a great experience being a vice-principal because in those last three years Carol taught French from the primary to intermediate grades. It kept her very current on curricular issues and on assessment and on using effective approaches to learning.

Administrative experiences. Carol was a vice-principal for three years in a very busy, very large school with 37 languages spoken and with 16 special education assistants with many students with special needs. Her time as a vice-principal varied from 70 percent teaching to 80 percent so in her last year she was a vice-principal a day and a half and she taught the rest of the time.

Present Experiences

School setting. Carol now has been a principal in an elementary school for nearly two years. This is her first principalship. There are more than 150 students in her school. The community is located in a high socio-economic area. Carol loved her school from the day she walked into the building. The students are terrific and the staff members are very dedicated. Parents willingly get involved in school activities. Carol felt that it's been an interesting process for her as a brand new principal to be entrusted with this huge responsibility of building a school, the first traditional school in her school system. The school became a traditional school halfway through last year because of the declining enrolment. She appreciates so much the opportunity that she has been given to try to make a success of the school. However, Carol had to work very hard with her staff to decide how they can be a traditional school and still maintain good teaching practices. Carol feels that she has been given this opportunity to build her dream school.

Traditional school concept. This is the first year of the traditional school for Carol, and it was hard to bring what she believes into education into the model of the

traditional school. Her traditional school model is based on traditional values and approaches, which means it is a modern or enhanced approach to traditional-based learning “where you will still get your phonics, you will still get your math concepts . . . you’ll still get all of those things but certainly within a very non-traditional framework” (C. I. p. 8). Carol further defined her traditional school concept as a place where everyone feels respected, where children are taught in a very outwardly fashion. The students are taught to have manners, to greet people, to say hello and good afternoon, to use people’s names, to make eye contact, to treat each other nicely, and to be good role models.

The model of student leadership in the school is not a student council so the school does not have a student council president. There are about 50 students from Grade 5 to Grade 7, *and* nearly all the students *are* involved with student leadership activities. They can sign up for whichever area they show interest in. For some it’s recycling, for some it’s MC-ing assemblies, for some it’s setting up the assembly, for some it’s coordinating different talent acts to perform at the assembly, for some it’s being an office monitor, or a lunch monitor or a library monitor, or taking care of the Lego Club. “It’s whatever they can do that fits them in their leadership role, but they’re all student leaders. So they know who they are, they know what jobs they do, and they take their responsibilities very seriously” (C. I. p. 7). She adds, “. . . it’s a really great way to build leadership capacity in kids who would otherwise never know that they could do something that would bring them some recognition and some personal satisfaction” (C. I. p. 7).

The other thing that Carol had worked really hard at is to build a very cohesive community based on mutual respect and trust. She strived to follow through on the

things she said, and tried to create a positive atmosphere. She believed that change starts at the local level within the school environment with teachers helping teachers and with experts to assist. Carol believes her school has put everything in place such as materials and release time for the teachers so that staff can work together. Carol's school has piloted a literacy program from Kindergarten to Grade 7. Although the pilot program has been in place for only six months, Carol has already seen progress and results in her school program. Enrolment has increased due to becoming a traditional school.

Community building. Carol's school is in a supportive community. She works very hard "to create an equilateral triangle between the staff, the parents, and the student so that we can all work together to create successful adults for the 21st century" (C. I. p. 11). Parent volunteers are involved in class activities. For example, there is no music teacher so a parent volunteers to teach the students music. There is also a volunteer band teacher. There are art specialists and drama specialists and physical education specialists coming into the school to help because Carol wants to create the most well-rounded environment that she can. She is creating a culture in which the entire community helps one another to support the children. Carol stated that much of this culture creation happens because she talks about the students to whoever will listen to her. Her philosophy about children is all about, "... who you are, what you're going to be, what kind of human being you're going to develop into, what kind of potential you have for success in life, acting with excellence, integrity, and respect in everything you do" (C. I. p. 11).

Last year, Carol's school competed against seven other school districts to win the bronze medal in reading. The students in her school collected money which was donated to Women in Afghanistan, an organization that raises money to fund a teacher. In spite

of being the second smallest school in the district, this was the only school to raise enough money to pay for one teacher for a year. She really encourages that kind of social responsibility in the students. Her school's garden club grew potatoes and pumpkins. They carved the pumpkins for the school and they donated the potatoes to Food on the Corner which is a soup kitchen.

Carol's thoughts about her minority status. Carol began to seriously reflect on her minority status when Barack Obama became President of the United States. Carol believed that with this event, it became possible for anybody who is of colour to understand that in fact all of the doors have opened. When she was a child, she never thought she could be on TV, she never thought she could be a writer or any of those things because she didn't see anybody of colour doing such activities. Today, people see minority people everywhere doing everything in every walk of life. Carol's awareness of her minority status has come much more to the forefront.

Carol told her students that when she was a little girl she never thought that she could be a principal because all the principals around her were white. But now she knows she can do whatever she wants because, "It doesn't matter what a person looks like. It just matters what a person is like" (C. I. p. 21). This concept is very evident in her philosophy at school. She encourages her students to be good human beings. For Carol, it's very uplifting to realize that her children and her students can live in a world where colour has no role in their success.

Future Intention

Carol really hopes to make a success of her school, ". . . to create a model of school philosophy that would carry on at this school after I'm gone" (C. I. p. 55). She wants to make a difference in the lives of these children, to create a place where people are

happy to come, whether it's their friend or staff or students, to be in a really dynamic and fun learning environment, and she wants them to want to be there to be better, to be successful. That's her reward. Carol's personal aspiration is that she would really enjoy pursuing a course of study, and doing her Doctor of Education would be a really exciting next natural step in her career.

Darlene's Case Story

Who Is Darlene?

Darlene is a principal in a Western Canadian public elementary school. The school has more than 40 years of history. There are about 250 students from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 7, and 25 staff members in her school. Five to ten percent of the students come from a variety of ethnic groups. Darlene is an Asian-Canadian mother of three children, and her husband is Caucasian, a retired teacher. She is in her early fifties. Darlene doesn't view herself as a visible minority because she has no accent. Darlene self-declares as a very interpersonal person. She empathizes with others, is an active listener, multi-tasker, analytical, able to diagnose a situation, and is a good problem solver. Darlene is able to see what may come ahead, and try to put preventative measures in place to prevent major catastrophes from happening. Darlene loves kids. She likes relating to kids, and she can talk to them at their level. Darlene said she never feels afraid to talk in front of a large audience.

Past Experiences

Family background. Darlene was born and raised in an Asian country. Darlene grew up in a family of seven children. Her mother raised her and her six siblings speaking English without local dialects so that nobody would hear them speak English with an accent. Darlene's family did everything together, and the family members were

very close. In Darlene's view, her parents were very supportive and loving people. In 1973, Darlene's family came to Canada. Darlene followed later, in 1976, after she graduated from a university in California. She has been in Canada for more than 30 years.

Childhood. Darlene had a wonderful and happy childhood. She and her siblings, her cousins, and their friends did a lot of things together. They played a lot of imaginary games such as *school*. Since Darlene was 10 years old, she wanted to be a teacher. She would play school with her younger brothers and sisters, especially in the summer. She would be the teacher and she would give them work to do. She taught them a lot during the summer: Math, writing, reading stories together. They wrote plays, they did art work, and they also laughed a lot together.

School years. Darlene took her first three grades in a private school in her home country. She skipped Grade 4 and attended an American school from Grades 5 to 8. For her high school, she went to a private school because the public school system wasn't very strong in her country. She was bored with school because there were few teachers that she really enjoyed. She remembered her Grades 5, 6, and 8 teachers, and especially her Spanish teacher, who instilled a love of Spanish, and her Grade 8 Math teacher who made mathematics fun and interesting. Darlene believes that it was her Grade 8 Math teacher who influenced her to major in mathematics at university even though she was not a good mathematics person.

Her high school was what she remembered most. She and her sister were in the same year and they had a lot of fun together. They got to do more than just sitting in rows and being lectured at. She loved physical education and was on the school volleyball team. She also played piano. Her mother wanted her to be a concert pianist but

because she injured her hand while playing volley ball, that ambition was never pursued. She still plays the piano.

As a student, Darlene listened to the teacher. She had to memorize and repeat things exactly as they were in the book. Darlene didn't like doing that so she would change things, putting them in her own words when she answered a question. The teachers didn't like that. She didn't like school and she promised if ever she became a teacher, she would never teach the way she was taught. Like other Asian children, to please her father, she considered studying accounting or Math or the sciences, but not the arts. Darlene was very glad to complete her high school. She applied to study in a university in America, and was accepted. Darlene was only 17 years old when she left for California. Darlene is thankful her parents supported her decision. Her mother's sisters lived in California so Darlene had lots of cousins, aunts, and uncles in California so wasn't alone.

University years. Darlene loved those four years spent in southern California. It was the first time for her ever outside of Asia so it was all a new experience for her. She was not treated as if she was a visible minority. In fact, some of her friends thought she was born and raised in California. She didn't have any accent and she felt she was part of the California culture. In her first year, Darlene did really well in school, but in her second year, she started to party more and to work full time because she didn't want her father to keep spending money on her. Her father helped her with her tuition but she wanted to make sure she had money to do other things so she found a job in a department store in Los Angeles. She also worked on campus where she got a lot of training to get into the work culture in North America. Darlene met a lovely lady who

became her mentor when she was at the department store. This mentor taught her everything there was to know about being a secretary and administrative assistant.

Darlene majored in mathematics and in her senior year, having completed all the Math requirements, she enrolled in comparative literature, drama, physical education courses, Karate, and volley ball. Mathematics enabled Darlene to develop the analytical part of her brain so that when she taught mathematics at the elementary level, it gave her a way to teach Math that was enjoyable for the students rather than just reading the book and doing the page. She incorporated games and manipulatives and really tried to make it fun for her students. She got them to act out parts so they understood the concepts.

Teaching experiences. Darlene came to Canada right after she finished her university studies and worked as a secretary for a large private company. She also worked as an administrative assistant for many years. In 1989, Darlene's mother encouraged her and offered to help her to go back to school full-time to get her teaching credentials. It was a career change for Darlene who was 35 at that time and a single mother with three children (later she remarried). She went to school and spent two years as a full time student, completed the program, and started teaching in 1991 in a Western Canadian city. She started out teaching Grades 6/7 as a substitute teacher. The next year she was hired to teach music at a school. She also taught computers, art, and Math enrichment. In her third year, she was hired as a Grades 3/4 teacher in an elementary school. She remained at that school teaching Grades 3/4 and later Grade 5. Then she transferred schools, and taught Grades 5/6, music, Grade 7, and looked after the library. Darlene taught from 1991 to 2001.

Darlene accepted a vice-principal position in 2001. From 2001 to 2005, she worked in two different schools. In her first vice-principal position, she taught 70% of

the time and did 30% administration. In her second vice-principal position, she taught 60% of the time and did 40% administration. Darlene wanted to know everything about all the workings of a school to become a better administrator so she took on a variety of assignments. She didn't stay in one class or teach the same thing over and over. She taught primary, intermediate, music, library, and did resource work with needy children so she could get a taste of what everybody's job is.

In 1999, Darlene was asked if she would like to be a principal for summer school for one month. She accepted and really enjoyed it. This experience made her decide to go back to university to get her Master of Education degree, a requirement for a principal position. Darlene finished her Master's degree in 2003 and began preparing for a future principal position.

Administrative experiences. Darlene had administrative assistant experiences before she began her career in education. In the educational area, Darlene's first administrative experience was as a summer school principal for one month in 1999, followed by vice-principalships in two different schools over the next five years. The vice-principal position duties in her last school were different from those in her first school because the second school was so large that it was divided into two parts by a very busy street. As vice-principal, Darlene assumed all the responsibilities for Kindergarten to Grade 3 in one building. She also functioned as the principal for two years so she got to learn what it was like to really be the one in charge of the whole site. In 2006, there was only one school district in her area which had a principal position open. Encouraged by her husband, Darlene applied for it and she was accepted. Darlene had additional administrative experience in the summer working with the leadership team to train new vice-principals. She led workshops for primary teachers who didn't

have Music training, and led workshops for teaching people how to use the computerized report card program. As well, she conducted teambuilding workshops.

Present Experiences

School setting. Darlene has been a principal at her present school for three years. The school population declined in recent years which is always a concern for Darlene. The community is a great community where the families are very involved in and supportive of the school. The students of Darlene's school are from very affluent families. Darlene's goal as a principal is "to help these children [students] learn to be more global citizens, to be thinking not of themselves at the start to think about being leaders in the world and how to be good leaders. . . to think outside of themselves" (D. I. p. 13)

Darlene's minority status contribution. Darlene's experiences of having lived in and grown up in a third world country definitely help her relate to the students who have come from a similar background. For example, Asians, out of respect, don't look you in the eyes, especially women and children. However, in North American schools, the teachers force students to look them in the eyes or the teachers will say the students are not listening. This is very difficult for the students from Asia because of their different cultures, so it helps Darlene to understand her students with Asian backgrounds.

Being a visible minority female principal helped Darlene to talk to Asian students' parents about the struggles that they might be having. In addition, Darlene is able to understand the culture and help to solve the problems among the students from different cultures. Darlene shared an example:

There [were] some students from China, Taiwan, and Korea, and . . . we were finding that they would pick fights out on the playground, all because they were Korean versus Chinese. So in order for me to bring them and say, "No, we don't

do that here, we're all Canadians" . . . What I did . . . was to bring in the multicultural workers who could sit and meet together and the multicultural worker could translate. I brought the Korean multicultural worker in and the Chinese multicultural worker in, and then we sat down with all the kids involved, and just had them to talk to each other to get them to know each other. Then after they got to know each other, they became good friends, and they started playing with each other. (D. I. pp. 36-37)

Because she is a visible minority principal, Darlene stated she was able to understand the students' cultural differences and issues. Darlene also believed that her minority status helped her understand the English as a Second Language (ESL) students. She thought when the students see that there's an Asian principal that helps them, they feel comfortable. Darlene is able to be a liaison or bridge between these ESL children and the English-speaking students in her school. As a minority status educator, she believes she brings diversity to her school. She thinks that, being a visible minority, she is able to be aware of the things that her students need to see. She brought in the Watoto Children's Choir from Uganda and members of the Mukatano Canadian Black community to do presentations for her students. "So I am always aware of what maybe my students need to see to break them out of the, what is it, break them out of the closed world that they have" (D. I. p. 22).

Darlene's views on accent and discrimination. Darlene believes that certain accents determined how much respect people received. A boy from Fiji in her school had a strong British accent but his accent, even though he was a black boy, was British, which gave him an appearance of a higher culture, of more intelligence. A Korean boy in her school spoke with a strong Asian accent and, ". . . people's impressions about the Asians were always that they were the ones, the cooks, who built the railroads, a subservient kind of people" (D. I. p. 34). Darlene believes that:

In the mind of the Caucasian, the Asian accent brings back that picture to their minds so people with an Asian accent don't receive as much respect as people with a British accent. It is discrimination, an oral discrimination as opposed to a visual discrimination. (D. I. p. 34)

Darlene also remembered a Chinese/Japanese fellow, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for forestry research winner, who was a top researcher in the forestry company she worked for. He was a very bright man, and a doctor (Ph.D.). Darlene explained:

He never used doctor as his title because he was very humble himself. He has a very strong Chinese accent and when people would come and meet with him, sometimes I would get really upset with them because they would talk down to him . . . I would always call him Dr. Chow, and then that would change their attitudes because the title would make a difference too. So add the doctor title and then they overlooked his accent but when they listened first to him on the phone I don't believe he got that kind of respect at first. (D. I. pp. 34-35)

Darlene's view of herself. Being a visible minority female school principal, Darlene thinks she is different from Caucasian school principals. Since she comes from a different cultural base, her experiences are different. She explained: "Some of them [Caucasian principals] are much more assertive, they're bolder, maybe sometimes more aggressive. They try to be more like a guy, like a man. Whereas being of my ethnic background, we are more [subservient]" (D. I. p. 37). She doesn't know if that has anything to do with her ethnic background or just her personality. Yet, as far as ability goes, she doesn't think she is any less capable than a Caucasian principal.

Even though Darlene does not consider herself as a visible minority, she thinks her experiences with many different cultures and having grown up in a different ethnic circle are an asset. She has always viewed herself as being part of the mainstream culture and believes many people have accepted her not because of her colour but because of her professional achievements.

Future Intention

Darlene is not sure she wants to stay a principal for much longer, but she plans to remain at this school for at least one more year. Then, “I would love to actually maybe work at the University . . . working with student teachers. I then might choose to retire, and spend more time with my family. I do love my job” (D. I. p. 54). She has no desire to go higher in the educational bureaucracy such as to central office or the district school division because she misses the classroom and she misses the students. Perhaps she will return to teaching in the classroom. “I would like to, maybe, work with schools that have . . . a greater diversity, with more visible ethnic groups” (D. I. p. 55).

Eva’s Case Story

Who Is Eva?

Eva, who is in her late fifties, is a principal in a Western Canadian public elementary school with a student population of about 180 students from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 7 with very few ESL students. Eva is a mother of two children. She is Asian-Canadian, and her husband, a professor in a large university in Western Canada, is Caucasian. Eva doesn’t define herself as an Asian or Canadian, but as a human being. She doesn’t feel that just having a different skin color will make her less important or make her feel that her value as a human being is diminished.

Eva believes that she has a very clear vision of what a good school should be. “I know very clearly where I can take them [students]” (E. I. p. 20). Eva identified her strength as working with parents who she believes are partners in the education process. Eva stated, “Because we only have the students for five hours a day. The rest of the days they are at home. So they [parents] play a pivotal role in supporting the value of the school” (I. p. 20). She also takes a personal interest in the students, empowering them to

pursue their own learning. She has a good understanding of curriculum and stated, “I have those skills and knowledge which are assets for me to be a good principal” (E. I. p. 20).

Past Experiences

Family background. Raised in an Asian country, Eva came to Canada when she was 19 years old and has lived here for about 38 years. Eva comes from a family of four children, and she is the youngest of three daughters in her family. Eva’s family members were free thinkers and she has always been able to do whatever she wants. Eva’s mother worked for the church as an elementary school teacher, and then she later opened up a one-room classroom in the new territories in an Asian city.

Childhood. Eva had a wonderful childhood. Her family promoted individualism as well as each of the four children reaching their full potential. The democratic family atmosphere encouraged Eva and influenced her philosophy of education. Eva liked school from early childhood and helped her mother teach the Grade 1 English class when she was a student in the elementary school. When she was young, Eva had begun to explore the concepts of teaching and learning. She has always felt that education and learning are the key avenues in seeking meaning in living.

School years. Eva was a very good student who enjoyed learning and maintained top marks in her classes. In the city where Eva lived, there were 13 grades so students wrote their first important exam at the end of Grade 6. Then another set of exams was written in Grade 10 in which Eva got seven distinctions (honours).

At the missionary school she attended from Grades 7 to 11, Eva enjoyed teachers who came from England, New Zealand, and Australia who brought the outside world to her. These teachers used a very interesting approach to the educational process. It was

not just purely memorization of facts but rather learning through play and experience, making connections with the experiences of other people as well. Eva commented, “I had always been fascinated with the idea of going abroad to study. My foreign teachers really had widened my horizons and kind of reaffirmed that my commitment to going abroad was the goal that [I] needed to pursue” (E. I. p. 3). At that time, her parents already knew she would leave her homeland at the end of Grade 13, so she wrote her final exams and came to Canada. Eva added, “I think that in terms of my role in education in my later life it has quite a lot to do with my early years and my positive experience being a student in those school systems” (E. I. p. 3).

University years. Having finished Grade 13 in Asia, Eva chose a Western Canadian university for her degree in psychology. “I thought at that time that psychology would help me to understand who I was as a person . . . build my knowledge, at the same time it would help me in terms of my interactions with other people” (E. I. pp. 3-4). Upon completing the degree Eva got a job as a child care worker, working at an elementary school. During that year she had the experience of working with a teacher who had a group of students who were mildly handicapped as well as behaviourally challenged. Eva’s job was basically to implement or support the teacher by implementing the educational program as well as the behavioral program. At the end of that year, this teacher suggested to Eva that she should apply for the program that offered a diploma in special education at the university where she had studied. She knew Eva was a bit late in terms of applying but, by contacting the professor who taught the course directly, the professor gave her a personal interview and decided to accept her into the program.

Eva spent a year studying closely with a cohort of 11 students who had a variety of educational backgrounds. It was a wonderful learning experience and she had opportunities to be placed in a variety of school settings in order to carry out her practicum, including a practicum in a Hawaiian institution for mentally challenged students. She had an opportunity to study how human behaviour was really affected by the environment in which people were placed. It especially helped her in understanding the importance of inclusion. Afterwards Eva took more courses so that she could complete the requirement for getting a teaching certificate.

Teaching experiences. When Eva finished her degree she was offered a job teaching in an institution for students with disabilities. Her former professor used to be the director there and it was because of her voluntary work at the institution that she was offered a job as soon as she graduated. She taught in the institution so that she could experience first-hand the life of handicapped students in an institutional setting. However, after about five years Eva got a scholarship, an educational leave to study. Her first inclination was to continue to work in the area of special education. After taking one or two courses, however, she felt that the educational practices in the research area had not been progressing at the rate that she liked so she switched to school counseling, looking at the emotional health of children and its impact on creating a positive atmosphere and learning environment. She completed her Master's degree in school counseling before she completed 10 years in teaching.

At the same time, Eva was offered a position by her present school district so she accepted the job and worked with severely handicapped students but in a segregated classroom. She worked about four or five years as a teacher in the resource classroom. She then moved into a behavioral problem resource classroom in an elementary school.

After that she moved into an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom and decided to return to her former university to pursue courses in ESL.

Administrative experiences. In Eva's last school, the assistant superintendent suggested to her that she should maybe look into furthering her career in the area of administration. At that time, she felt that she needed some new challenges so she decided to apply for a vice principal position. During her first three years as a vice-principal, Eva was mentored by a male principal who allowed her to experiment with different projects. She used computer technology; worked as an ESL-language enhancement teacher; created and reinforced the importance of early literacy; encouraged parents' involvement in the whole area of education; and also explored the concept of partnerships in education.

After those three years there was a change of principalship in the school, and Eva became the acting principal. She continued to work as an acting principal during the next year. She did find it a bit challenging because her appointment always came in three-month stages and was constantly being renewed. She always felt she was just filling in for the time being. She didn't seem to have a clear goal for herself because she was acting in the position. At that time her mother was sick so she decided to take a year off. Her mother died in August, and she decided to spend a year volunteering in two schools.

Eva spent the next year exploring the teaching of Math. At the end of that project, she and another district staff member submitted a grant application to further explore the shift in the area of teaching numbers. They ended up receiving a \$25,000 grant for two years. The district was very supportive and she was appointed vice principal at the school where the action research was carried out for the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education. She spent another three years as a vice

principal, focusing on teaching Math. When those three years were over, her principal really felt that Eva should move on and become a principal herself. Eva took his advice, applied for a principal position, and succeeded.

As a teacher for 24 years, Eva *was* much involved in exploring best practice, and so she was frequently presenting at conferences. She also taught a 400 level Special Education course as a sessional instructor at the university where she had studied. When Eva was doing her Master's degree, she co-authored a book which focused on the integration of special needs students into the regular program. At the same time, she also conducted research on teaching handicapped students to develop an awareness of their own emotions. As an educator, Eva was able to not only work in the area of Special Education but also to learn and grow with a group of teachers, and to consider bringing about structural changes in the curriculum for the students.

Present Experiences

School setting. Eva has been a principal in her present school for nearly three years. Her school is located in a quiet, idyllic setting among the agricultural farms of Western Canada. It has a rich history built on honoring the pioneering people who started farming and working in this area. With this foundation, her school is committed to building a socially responsible, appreciative community of thoughtful learners.

Eva's views of minority status contribution. Eva's district has tried to expand the area of international education because of the large number of students who have arrived from other parts of the world. Eva feels that her Asian ancestry is an advantage to her as a principal. In her words, "I think that in the minds of the students coming to the school, seeing an Asian principal, they may feel a bit more comfortable" (E. I. p. 18).

Eva's view of accent. Eva speaks English with an accent. She said that her students recognize that, as do the parents and her staff. Eva thinks accent is not important. She thinks that ultimately it's not so much the accent that is the critical part; what is critical is the ability to communicate. She emphasized:

What is important is the person doing the job as a principal, their competency in running a school, their competency in nurturing children, their competency in raising this achievement level of the students, their competency in developing in the children a sense of value, a sense of social responsibility. (E. I. p. 31).

She doesn't think people who speak English with an accent have a problem becoming principals because it really depends on people's competency. Sometimes it may be a factor at the beginning but the people who are doing the interview are very sophisticated people. They know and have experience with a variety of people, a variety of accents. Ultimately accent is not a determining factor at all.

A few thoughts about her present work. Eva thinks that during the first two years of her principalship she always felt somewhat on edge. She kept on asking herself if she was doing the right thing and how the staff was responding to her. In her third year as a principal, she knows that there are many things happening in the direction she wants. Examples of this include staff involvement in the process of change; staff are starting to take on leadership roles on their own; trust is being established; and staff are willing to engage in dialogue even though they may have differences of opinions and don't feel personally attacked but, rather, see what is good for the whole school or the school community. Eva believes when people in her school start to look beyond the surface and allow her as a principal to make mistakes without pointing fingers at her, she knows that this is the process of growth. She feels confident and knows she is on the right track of guiding the school.

The present work emphasis. Eva is really interested in looking at improving her school. She would like to build a very strong foundation for learning among the primary students. She wants to create an educational setting that is intellectually challenging, that is humane and caring and socially responsible and that prepares citizens for the 21st century. In the Kindergarten program, the staff encourages students to focus more in the area of literacy and have involved parents in reading with the children through workshops. Also encouraging a positive attitude towards learning is one of the key elements for building a strong foundation for her students.

In addition, Eva's school also focuses on at-risk students who are not meeting the grade level outcomes. Eva works closely with teachers in providing assistance to those students. Eva used a grant which she received to develop what she called peer coaching. The teachers select students who are readers, students who love to read, and students who need to develop the confidence that they can read, to be readers to younger students. Grades 5 or 6 students who are not good readers, were assigned as readers to Kindergarten students in order to build their confidence in reading,

Future Intention

Eva indicated that she is at the end of her career path and she will be retiring within the next two years. For now, she just really wants to focus on the best practice in the school. She wants to have an opportunity to take a group of staff, especially in this small school, through the process of positive change. In terms of her aspirations, she is not interested in a central office position. She is experimenting, however, with looking at systemic change.

Conclusion of Chapter Four

In this chapter, five case stories about the participants' comprehensive backgrounds were told. Although they all came from Asian countries, they migrated to Canada at different ages and came from different family backgrounds. Their different life experiences shaped who they are and what they believe. The five case stories provide the readers with a picture of the journey toward the road of educational administration of these five visible minority female principals, and help readers to better understand the education philosophy and administrative work life of the five individuals that will be presented in the next chapter.

In Chapter Five, the data will be presented in three themes which are related to the three research sub-questions. Each theme includes the relevant topics which are summed up from five cases stories based on the data collected through interviews, documents, and the researcher's reflective journal. The similarities and differences among the five cases stories will be explained and compared.

CHAPTER FIVE
INDUCTIVE DATA ANALYSIS OF
VISIBLE MINORITY FEMALE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES

This chapter provides the five participants' work life experiences using Hatch's (2002) *Steps in Inductive Analysis* to make the comparisons. As the data were analyzed by identifying codes, categories, and themes in each case story map, I began to compare similar codes, categories, and themes again and again based on the data collected from the three in-depth interviews, documents, and the researcher's reflective journal (Creswell, 2002; Shkedi, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Similarities and differences based on the three research sub-questions across the five cases are focused on in this chapter, and additional findings will be presented at the end of this chapter. The presentation of the compared information about the participants and their diverse backgrounds will be summarized first.

A Comparison of Background Information about the Participants

The data in this study were collected from five visible minority female school principals in five different schools in Western Canada: four elementary and one high school. The comparisons of the five principals in 10 categories are displayed in Table 1. The 10 categories are Heritage, Age of Coming to Canada, Years of Living in Canada, Self-declared Status, Years of Teaching, Years as Vice-Principal, Years as Principal, Years as Principal at Present School, Degrees, and Master's Major.

Table 1 provides an overview of the background comparisons of the five participants. The five participants share five similarities: they are all of Asian heritage, they are all first generation immigrants, they all have Bachelor of Art and Master's degrees, they were all vice-principals prior to becoming principals, and they were vice-principals at least as long as, and usually longer than, they have been principals.

A number of differences distinguish the five visible minority female principals from each other. At the time of the interviews, the ages of the five participants coming to Canada varied from one year old to 22 years old; years of living in Canada varied from over 30 years to 45 years; years of teaching varied from 10 to 24 years; years as vice-principal varied from three to seven years; years as principal varied from two to seven years; years as principal at their present schools varied from two to four years. The participants self-declared their status in one of three ways: Asian Canadian, Canadian, and human being. The major in their Master's degrees were different: two participants studied educational administration, one was in curriculum, one was in English language education, and one was in school counseling.

Table 1

Background Comparisons of the Participants

Names	Ann	Betty	Carol	Darlene	Eva
Categories					
Heritage	Asian	Asian	Asian	Asian	Asian
Age of Coming to Canada	7	13	1	22	19
Years of Living in Canada	45	38	48	Over 30	38
Self-Declared Status	Asian Canadian	Asian Canadian	Canadian	Asian Canadian	Human being
Years of Teaching	16	21	15	10	24
Years as Vice Principal	7	6	3	5	7
Years as Principal	7	5	2	3	3
Years as Principal at Present School	4	3	2	3	3
Degrees	B. Ed., M. Ed.	B. Ed., M. Ed.	B. Ed., M. Ed.	B. Ed., M. Ed.	B. Ed., M. Ed.
Master's Major	Curriculum	Administration	English Language Education	Administration	School Counseling

Data Presentation

As indicated, the purpose of the research is to examine and describe the administrative work life experiences of the selected visible minority female principals, with a particular focus on the path they took to become principals, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they use to foster inclusive schools.

Research Questions

The main research question for this study is:

How is educational administration experienced from a female, visible minority point of view in the Western Canadian educational context?

The main question consists of three sub-questions:

1. What is the path to becoming a school principal for visible minority females?
2. What are the challenges visible minority female principals experienced in their role as school principals?
3. What strategies do visible minority female principals use to make their schools more inclusive?

Each research question is analyzed according to the themes discovered from the research. These themes are presented under the headings of each research question as some themes are common to more than one research question. The following data presentation is based on the data collected from three in-depth interviews, documents, and the researcher's reflective journal.

Themes Related to Research Question #1:

What Is the Path to Becoming a School Principal for Visible Minority Females?

From reviewing the in-depth interviews, documents, and the researcher's reflective journal, six themes describe the path these visible minority females took to

becoming principals. These themes are: (a) influences; (b) personal abilities and strengths; (c) challenges; (d) supports; (e) preparatory and training programs; and (f) the process to achieve the principal position. These six themes as they relate to the first research question are elaborated and summarized in the following sections.

Influences

From the data collected, it was apparent that the five participants were similarly influenced by three factors: (a) family; (b) society; and (c) organizations. These three factors were both positive and negative influences in shaping these five visible minority female principals to be who they are today, their beliefs about education, and their approach to educational administration.

Family influences. All participants in this study indicated that the influences they received from their parents and the methods their parents used to nurture the participants' personality and characteristics from a young age helped in building their later goals of pursuing education and leadership. All five participants came from highly educated Asian families. In Asian culture, parents have high demands and expectations of their children regarding their education and future. High value is placed on careers in medicine, law, and engineering rather than teaching. However, the positions of vice principal and principal in a school are more highly regarded than teachers. Three of the five participants mentioned that their parents didn't place this kind of high expectation on them; they just wanted their children to be what they wanted to be as long as they were happy with what they were doing. Only one participant indicated her parents had high expectations for her, and another participant indicated her mother had high expectations for her and her siblings to speak the English language without an accent. The parents' influences to pursue educational career goals were:

My parents always encouraged us just to be the best we can be and to be happy . . . my family just supported me all the way. (C. I. p. 9)

My mother and father are both university educated and they have high expectations . . . they did everything to ensure their children were going to be well educated and be able to face the world and its challenges. (B. I. p. 2)

In my family, I was always taught to pursue education as a means to bring about a better livelihood, at the same time because of my early involvement in education. I have always felt that education and learning are the key avenues in seeking for meaning in living. (E. I. p. 8)

My family has always told me we can do anything and my parents have always been very supportive. (D. I. p. 12)

[My parents] were very adventurous people. And so I never felt from them that because I was female I couldn't do many different jobs . . . there was never any pressure to become a doctor or an engineer or a principal like it was just you know whatever I wanted to do that kind of thing. (A. I. p. 2, p. 10)

In addition to parents' influence, other family members such as husbands, siblings, and fathers-in-law also contributed to influencing and encouraging the participants' efforts toward their goal of educational administration. Darlene, Eva, and Carol explained the influence they received in the following manner:

. . . I have a brother who's a doctor, [and other siblings] have been system analysts, and another one who's an engineer, another one who's an accountant. And they're all visible minorities and are successful in their careers . . . So I think that's given me the confidence to go ahead and try to apply for the (administration) position. My husband has been very supportive. He's actually the one that encouraged me. (D. I. p. 12)

In my current family . . . my husband is at the university level [so] in many ways education has always been part of our life and culture . . . the types of people we are with are always very much involved in teaching and learning. (E. I. p. 8)

My father-in-law would always say, "Why are you a teacher? There's no status in it. You should be a principal." And he actually takes credit for me becoming a principal. (C. I. p. 9)

Social influences. Social influences in this study were both positive and negative, and played an important role in influencing the five participants on their journey toward educational administration. Betty, as indicated in her case story in Chapter Four, grew up in a racially-biased community in England and at the school she attended there were a lot of racist comments not just because she was a girl but because she was a visible minority. This left a negative impression with Betty. However, when Betty moved to Canada, she found Canadian society to be very welcoming, respectful, and accepting. Teachers in school were very helpful but she found bullying and overt racism common. Those experiences made an impression upon Betty and influenced her to decide at a very early age that if she would be in a high position in school, she would want everyone to feel comfortable and feel like they belong, no matter where they came from. She was determined to work towards preventing bullying at her school.

Eva and Darlene both compared American and Canadian societies and drew similar conclusions. They both believed that the multicultural Canadian society is presently more open and fair than earlier in terms of hiring more qualified females and visible minorities in different leadership positions. They believe a person is able to strive to be whatever they wish. Darlene further emphasized that qualifications are important because society demands quality. Eva claimed that in Canada, a visible minority person has opportunities to compete the same as any other person in the mainstream, and competency is a critical element in securing employment.

Social influence to Ann was always positive because she lived in a very friendly small community in Western Canada. There were no other Asians where she lived. She had never experienced racism or other discriminative things and decided at an early age that she would view society in a positive way. Ann said that she did not worry about her

visible minority part or female part. She just focused on working to compete and pursue what she wanted with her skills and talents.

Carol felt society was very generous to her because she never thought about or prepared to be a principal. Carol said that her personality traits such as longing to have fun, dislike for hierarchy, and the need to be connected to children were the biggest limitations in thinking about becoming an administrator. However, she found that society is more accepting of her than what she imagined because, in spite of her perceived limitations, she was accepted as a principal.

Organizational influences. The five participants in this study all experienced different positive and negative organizational influences. These influences contributed to the way in which they were able to realize their dream of becoming a school principal.

The most important organizational influence for Eva was that her school district considered the individual's skills, knowledge, and ability to promote the best learning environment and meeting community needs more critical than the person's skin color. Eva was also impressed with the whole idea of equity, fairness, and caring emphasized in her school system.

Darlene's organizational influences came from a Protestant church in her home country in which people accepted all cultures and did not notice others' skin color. Darlene not only made a lot of Western friends but also learned to not view herself as a visible minority. She also learned that when she became more accepting of others, others, in return, were more accepting of her.

Ann used her positive attitude to explain how she was influenced by organizations. She stated that when she first applied for a vice-principal position in her school system, she didn't get it. She has never blamed it on her Asian heritage or her

gender; instead, she thought she just wasn't the best person for the job. Ann stated she knew some women became very bitter because they felt they haven't gotten as far as they wanted to because they were a woman and/or visible minority. Ann mentioned that sometimes organizations wanted to fill their quota of visible minority people and gender roles as well, but even if that was true, ultimately, a person still had to prove herself in that position.

Carol talked about organizational influences first with a question. She asked, “. . . although sometimes you wonder am I being chosen because of my colour, despite my colour, or does it even come into play? It's never clear” (C. I. p. 2). Carol described her experiences with her school system during the time she was a vice-principal. She said she learned a huge lesson from a major teacher strike in her system. The central office in her school system warned her not to interact with the strike line. Carol felt frustrated because she did not want to oppose her school system. However, she chose to support the teachers by visiting them and bringing treats to them. When the strike was over, the teachers thanked her for what she had done and it really turned into a very bonding relationship between Carol and her teachers.

Organizational influences for Betty were both positive and negative. On the one hand, Betty was very impressed with the university organization, with the inclusive student population where students from different cultures got along and studied together. On the other hand, Betty had a negative experience with a dean in this university who conducted the entry teacher interview with her. Betty said:

He hadn't even spoken to me, but I don't know if he thought that I was a new landed immigrant because when he spoke to me in the interview he spoke to me really slowly like I was stupid or didn't understand English. So that was maybe my first taste of bias at the University, and he as much as told me there are lots of

other things that I could do, that probably Education was not the career for me.
(B. I. p. 3)

These organizational situations influenced Betty and made her want to be in a school where there was not just one culture but a variety of interesting rich cultures.

In conclusion, from the data derived from the influences which related to the first research question, family, society, and organizational influences impacted the five visible minority female principals. Although these influences had both positive and negative aspects for the participants, they intertwined to shape the five visible minority female principals' personalities, strengthened their will on the road to a principalship, and, importantly, laid their foundation and beliefs in education and leadership.

Personal Abilities and Strengths

Data collected showed that the five participants shared four personal abilities and strengths which laid a solid foundation for them on their path to a principal position. First, all five visible minority female principals have a Master's degree and enjoy learning new experiences. Second, they all had a good reputation as teachers in their schools. Third, they were teacher leaders either in their schools, outside their schools, or both. Lastly, they enthusiastically use their diverse experiences to influence teachers and students, and to make a difference for their school and for their students' learning.

The differences in personal abilities and strengths among the participants varied with their different personal backgrounds, interests, and the needs of their schools and districts. Ann's leadership abilities lay in her strong teaching reputation and her solid curriculum knowledge; her hard work as an English Department Coordinator; service as the president of the English Teachers' Association for her school system; her writing of

the first assessment documents for the province, the workshops and accreditation seminars she led for her school system; and her teaching at the university.

Eva's unique strengths were the commitment to bring about the best and positive learning environment for children and addressing the learning needs of a diverse group of students; her action research; and working with a variety of teachers. For Darlene, her abilities showed in her involvement in the total life of her school: coaching sports teams, leading the choir, teaching the music for all the classes, showing an interest in the lives of her students, as well as helping teachers. Carol's strengths lay in her university teaching experiences; computer technology skills; language development and assessment for learning; as well as her ability in developing curricula for the Grades 2/3 classrooms which are used province-wide.

Betty, along with the other four participants, had strong abilities in planning, organizing and delivering workshops, and presentations. Betty presented at New Teachers Orientation sessions on *personal and professional abilities* for her school system several times. Her workshops were on *the research continuum* and on *anti-bullying*. In addition, she also served as a committee member on six professional committees and focused on reviewing curricula, finding resources, and providing supports to other teachers.

In summary, the findings presented above illustrate both similarities and differences in the abilities and strengths of the five participants and their preparation for leadership positions. It is important to note that most of the participants did not strongly identify as visible minority. Most of them were not strongly connected to the Asian heritage community.

Challenges

There are some challenges which existed on the road to pursuing a principalship for the participants. From the data collected, three challenges emerged: (a) personal challenges; (b) professional challenges; and (c) organizational challenges. These challenges, although common to all the participants, were experienced differently by each of them.

Personal challenges. The data showed that all five participants experienced personal challenges before they applied for a principal position. For Eva, the main personal challenge for her was building up self-confidence and seeing herself as a capable person to deal with a variety of ages and settings. Eva explained that her personal challenges were due to her coming from a well-protected family setting and growing up without any negative experiences, and a lack of wide life experiences in handling complicated situations.

Darlene identified her two main personal challenges as time and paper. She said, “Time would be the biggest personal challenge, because . . . the job is very demanding. And I’m not the most organized person when it comes to paper . . . it is what to do with all the paper that comes through my desk” (D. I. p.18). Darlene explained that it was hard to find time for her family – her husband, daughters, and mother – as well as to find time to network and to build relationships with others.

Ann faced two main personal challenges before she applied for a principal position. The first was her health. Ann was not sure if she could handle a principal job. Secondly, athleticism, especially in high schools, is a big part of the culture. Carol explained that she had three personal challenges: time management; setting aside time to

have fun and to connect with family and friends; and her self-esteem and how other people perceived her.

Compared with the other four participants, Betty's personal challenges were more substantial. She indicated that her first personal challenge at that time was the money she needed to pay for her Master's tuition fees and books. Although her first husband was very wealthy, it was really traumatic for her to ask him for help so her parents helped to pay for some of her education. Betty's second personal challenge was time. She was working full time and many of the Master's classes she took were held at night or on Saturday. It took a lot of time away from her children and she would always worry about missing out on the fun times with her children. The last personal challenge for Betty was her first marital relationship. Betty explained that her first husband was jealous of her because she had one degree more than he had and she was continuing to improve herself to be successful at her job. As a result, Betty faced mental and emotional challenges as she had to focus on her study as well as a *broken-hearted* marriage.

Professional challenges. In addition to the personal challenges, all the participants experienced similar and different kinds of professional challenges. Ann's professional challenge showed in her approach to learning. She believed that everyone has strengths and weaknesses and they have to work on their weaknesses so as to learn other curricula, to learn the whole sporting world, and to learn all the different cultures of the school. Eva indicated her professional challenges were in balancing a career and home because of her long thirteen-hour working days, and the long distance (one hour, one way by car) between home and school.

Carol's professional challenge, ". . . is redefining what I think the person in the office does and making it my own, and making it something that other people around me value" (C. I. p. 19). Betty's professional challenge was that she did not know the exact procedures of the vice-principal and principalship selection process because what she was told was not what she saw. Betty took a long time and a lot of patience to reach her goal. Darlene believed her Asian roots explained why she was not confrontational or aggressive enough.

Organizational challenges. The third challenge for these visible minority females in applying for a principalship were organizational except for Eva, who claimed that she did not face such challenges. The other four participants experienced similar organizational challenges in their school systems. They were not sure of the process or demands within the school system for choosing a vice-principal or principal. Betty was not sure of the process while Darlene thought she sensed that there was a hierarchy of who would get the positions first in her school system when she applied for a vice-principal position. Although she was told that a person needed to try three times, there were some people who got it on their first try. She applied twice for a principalship and when they told her to apply again, she chose to apply in another district instead. Carol felt that her profile didn't fit what her former school system was looking for which was why she applied for a principal position in her present district.

Similar organizational challenges for Ann were related to questions about gender and the fact that there were only a few female principals in high schools as compared to elementary schools. Ann wondered if her being appointed to a principalship in a high school had anything to do with gender or race. However, Ann developed a positive attitude with which to view her organizational challenges. Her view was:

It wasn't a personal thing; it was just not my turn yet. It was that person's time they were looking for whatever qualities they have at that time. So the next time I had to learn and to become stronger in those areas. (A. I. p. 24)

In the organizational challenges, none of the participants indicated that race and color played a negative role in their applying for a principal position although others indicated to them that such might be a factor(s). Both Ann's and Betty's brothers experienced some discrimination when they applied for jobs but Ann, Betty, and Darlene believed that in the area of education, at least in their school systems, being a visible minority was an asset for them. All the participants said they also learned to see things in different ways and did not let their race or color bother them.

In brief, the challenges indicated above show that participants had experienced personal, professional, and organizational difficulties on their professional journey. However, these difficulties provided them with opportunities to strengthen their will, to learn to view things in different ways, and prepared them to acquire some abilities to deal with challenges as they sought principalship positions.

Supports

Besides the challenges, the participants also received many supports in their journey toward gaining a principal position. The participants indicated support was received from: (a) family; (b) encouragement; (c) role models; and (d) mentors. The similarities and differences of these four supports as experienced by the five participants are analyzed according to the order above.

Family. All five participants received support from family members such as the husband, children, and parents in their goal to become a principal. Ann, Carol, Darlene, and Eva indicated they were supported by their husbands while Betty stated she was not. Four participants stated they were encouraged to apply for the principal position by their

husbands who believed in their leadership potentials. The family support also came from parents. For example, Betty's parents helped to pay her tuition fees and gave her emotional support; Ann's parents helped her by taking care of her children and always being proud of her no matter what she chose to do. Another family support came from the children. Carol, Darlene, and Eva mentioned that their children, together with their husbands, supported them to become a principal. However, Ann's and Betty's children were very young at the time they pursued their principal position.

Encouragement. The data indicated that the other important support for the five participants was encouragement from colleagues over time. The following quotations illustrate the encouragement these participants received as they thought about becoming a principal:

My principals were always really supportive and encouraging. My superintendents were very supportive. You know, I worked with some great people. (A. I. p. 16)

I didn't know that I always wanted to be a principal but I had fellow principals when I was a teacher telling me that they thought I had the qualities that it would take to make a good principal and so I should go into that. (B. I. p. 8)

The assistant superintendent suggested to me that I should maybe look into furthering my career in the area of administration. (E. I. p. 5)

I had a principal . . . who really encouraged me and supported me to become a VP [vice-principal]. [He] said, "You have so much to offer. Not many people have the experience, the background, and the capability that you do." And so he really, really encouraged me to apply and I honestly didn't think it would ever happen. (C. I. p. 10)

. . . as I started to apply and go that way I had wonderful mentors who were principals already who encouraged me and said yes it's about time [to apply principal position] and they shared their experience with me. (D. I. p. 16)

Role models. The data showed that role models were an important factor in supporting these females on their road toward a principalship. All five participants had

role models who had many leadership qualities that attracted these participants to learn from them and model their behaviours. These role models set good examples for them to learn and to follow which helped them on the road to educational administration. Eva had two role models. They were capable, hard-working female principals in her school system. Both were knowledgeable and had very definite ideas about the direction in which their schools or school districts should go. Eva emphasized that her role models were not members of a visible minority group because in those days, there were not too many visible minority females as principals.

Ann's role models were former women principals who she admired for the way they handled things. However, Ann regarded her husband who was an administrator in the same school system as her most important role model. Ann admired how he handled situations and the ways in which he cared for his students and his staff.

Betty's role models were two male principals when she was a teacher and three female principals when she was a vice-principal. All of them were very knowledgeable about what they did. All had taught and had a variety of school experiences. Betty liked the way they presented themselves, the way they handled difficult situations and perhaps explosive situations with students and their families in a positive manner. Betty enjoyed watching them and learned from them.

Carol had two role models. When she was a teacher, the male principal in her school was a person who enjoyed having fun, and was respectful and interactive. She admired the way he was connected to the staff and the students, knew all the students' names, was friends with everybody as well as being able to make decisions. The other role model for Carol was her school's female principal when Carol was a vice principal.

Carol admired her incredibly hard work ethic, her vision for the school, and the way in which she cared for her students.

When Darlene was thinking about becoming a principal, she had two female principals and two male principals who were good role models for her. As a vice principal, she had one role model for whom she had very high respect. She respected the way this individual led by always consulting staff and being inclusive.

Mentors. Mentors played an important role when the five participants aspired to a principalship. For Carol, Eva, and Darlene, their role models were their mentors. Ann had more mentors than role models. She mentioned a couple of female administrators who were her mentors, and some of the male principals and her husband also served as her mentors. Ann telephoned them and asked them questions and sought their opinions according to the areas and topics of concern to her. Betty's role model was also her mentor. Betty watched her in difficult situations making tough decisions about staff, and was impressed by the way in which she handled everything with such dignity, grace, and care.

Mentors served as a source of guidance for the five participants on their way to pursuing a principalship. These mentors also helped the participants to build the foundation for their future leadership performance and also used their experiences to help the participants to learn what they had learned and helped the participants to shorten their time to assume the role as a principal in the future. Betty always remembered what her mentor told her:

You know people just want you to listen when they're upset. They want you to listen and they want to know that they've been heard because at the end of the day everybody wants to be heard, to be loved, to be respected, and to feel like they belong. (B. I. p. 36)

In terms of supports, all five participants were asked if it was necessary to have visible minority females as their role models and mentors on their way toward a leadership position. Their answers were similar. First, there were not many visible minority females principals so a person may have had to wait for a long time to find such a person. Second, it depends on what people's values are. If a person thinks visible minority role models and mentors are important, they need to seek them out. Because these five participants regard themselves as equal to the mainstream in the Canadian multicultural society, they don't regard having visible minority role models and mentors as critical towards attaining a principalship. Third, having visible minority female role models and mentors is not necessary but they are an advantage to help to solve problems and to share confidences. Finally, all of the five participants had no role models or mentors that were visible minorities except for one who had an Aboriginal female as a mentor.

In short, the supports which the five participants received from their families, and their role models and mentors encouraged and inspired them to consider a leadership position and gave them confidence to uncover their leadership potential, as well as pushed and guided them on the road to educational administration.

Preparatory and Training Programs

The participants indicated that the preparatory and training programs helped them in their pursuit of a principalship. The data showed that the preparatory or training programs the five participants participated in were similar in three ways: (a) The five participants all acted as teacher leaders when they were teachers; (b) They all have a Bachelor of Education and Master's degree in Educational Administration or a field related to Education; and (c) They all attended educational leadership training programs

such as short courses or workshops or both in their school systems when they were vice principals.

There were two main differences that distinguished the five participants. First, their Master's degree majors were different among the group: two of them were in Educational Administration, one was in Curriculum, one was in English Language Education, and the other was in School Counseling. Ann believed her vice-principal job was a better form of preparation for her principal position than her Master's degree in Curriculum Studies. Betty differed in her preparation compared with the others, in the conferences she attended and the six weeks she spent shadowing a female principal for her Master's program. The other difference was the length of the specific leadership training programs which these participants attended.

In summary, the preparatory and training programs the five participants received before they became principals played important roles for their future principalships. As Carol concluded:

I think they [training programs] were extremely beneficial because it allows you to develop this broader type of framework and philosophy about leadership and what kind of leadership you wanted to show and what different leadership styles can accomplish in schools. (C. I. p. 10)

The Process to Achieve the Principal Position

Based on the data discussed in the previous sections, this section will serve to illustrate the whole process which led the five participants to their principal positions. Four similarities in the process for the participants to get a principal position were found in the data. First, they were all influenced by their family, society, and school system. Second, the participants all had their own particular abilities and strengths which they used toward reaching their goal of a principalship. Third, they all encountered personal,

professional, and/or organizational challenges during their process of attaining a principalship. Fourth, they all received support from their family members, colleagues' encouragement, guidance from role models and mentors, and different preparatory and training programs.

Differences between the five participants in their journey towards a principalship were in the length of time spent on travelling this path and the different personal backgrounds and school system situations. The routine for becoming a principal in Western Canada was more or less as Betty described it:

In our school [system] the path that you take to become a principal when I started . . . was to get your Master's degree and apply for a vice principalship and then after you'd been a vice principal for some time, at least five years being a vice-principal in different types of schools and different sizes of schools, then you apply for [the principalship] and if you're successful you get a principalship . . . that's what happened to me. (B. I. p. 13)

The whole process to achieve a principal position for each of the five participants can be summarized as following:

Betty's process: 10 years teaching – Master's degree – vice-principal (6 years) – principal

Eva's process: 10 years teaching – Master's degree - teaching – vice-principal (2 years) – acting principal (1.5 years) – teaching – vice-principal (3 years) – principal

Ann's process: 8 years teaching – Master's degree – vice-principal (7 years) – principal

Darlene's process: 8 years teaching – Master's degree –vice-principal (doing some principal duty 5 years) – principal

Carol's process: 10 years teaching – Master's degree – work in a university – back to teaching (5 years) – vice-principal (3 years) – principal

In short, from the data collected, it was evident to the researcher that the five participants all underwent a similar process toward attaining their principal position. For some of them this process went more directly and was shorter, while for the others the process was indirect and took a little bit longer. Eventually they all reached their goal and came to the principal stage to contribute their abilities and skill to their dream of education and administration.

Summary of Themes Related to Research Question #1: What Is the Path to Becoming a School Principal for Visible Minority Females?

The six themes that emerged from the first research question were influences, personal abilities and strengths, challenges, supports, preparatory and training programs, and the process to achieve the principal position. These visible minority females were all influenced by their families, the society in which they lived, and the organizations in which they were involved or to which they belonged, namely, their school systems. The personal abilities and strengths which these visible minority female principals possessed formed the foundation for their future promotion and helped to build their confidence to seek opportunities for a principal position.

They faced different kinds of personal, professional, and organizational challenges. Obviously, the way in which they dealt with these challenges had become a way to strengthen their strong beliefs toward their goal of education and administration. Most participants did not perceive their visible minority status was an obstacle and challenge in their pursuit of an administrative position.

The female principals also had supports which influenced them to choose administrative positions while they were teachers or vice principals. These supports came from family members, particular persons as role models and mentors, and the

encouragement that was provided to them. The participants indicated that the particular persons they truly admired were directors, superintendents, former principals, vice principals, friends, and husbands. These persons were regarded as important support components in the process of seeking a principalship. The important fact was that through these role models and mentors, and from their encouragement, these visible minority females recognized their own abilities, thought they were suited for an administrative position, and began to prepare for it. Although other studies indicated having visible minority role models and mentors were very important for helping visible minority females to achieve their leadership goals, the participants in this study claimed it was not necessary to have visible minority females as their role models or mentors because it was hard to find them. None of them had any visible minority individuals as role models and mentors.

All the participants in this study engaged in similar formal and informal, academic and experiential, preparatory and training activities and experiences as they planned to step into administrative positions. Participants also regarded their teacher-leader role in schools as a preparation for the position.

The process to achieve the principal position for these visible minority females can be described in terms of similar factors, i.e., influences, abilities and strengths, challenges, supports, and preparatory and training activities. Differences occurred in the length of the time it took to achieve the goal of a principalship, and whether the path they took to the principal position was direct or indirect.

***Themes Related to Research Question #2: What Are the Challenges Visible Minority
Female Principals Experienced in Their Role as School Principals?***

Five challenges emerged from the data on this research question: (a) personal challenges; (b) professional challenges; (c) organizational challenges; (d) race and gender; and (e) accent and related discrimination. Some principals faced all these challenges while other principals might have faced only some of these challenges.

Personal Challenges

The data showed these visible minority female principals faced three personal challenges that were common to all of them. These were time management, balancing family obligations with professional commitments, and work time. Each participant also faced personal challenges.

Ann's personal challenges were her health, never having been an athlete or a coach, and time with her daughter, especially during those times when she was sick. For Betty, her personal challenge was that she didn't have enough time to do all the things that she needed to do. Darlene's personal challenge was to get her husband to understand the demands of her principal job and then to find time for her husband, her mother, and her daughters, and try to get as much of her work as possible done at school or stay late at school so that she didn't take work home. Darlene's other challenge was what to do with all the paper that comes through her desk because she admitted she was not the most organized person.

One of Carol's personal challenges was that her work ethic sometimes stood in the way of her personal life. She set her goal this year to achieve a better balance and to spend time with her family. Another personal challenge for Carol was that it is hard for her to set aside time simply to have fun. Eva's three personal challenges were to balance

the time between the principal job and her home life because she works long, 13-hour days; to see herself as a capable principal to deal with a variety of ages and settings because she doesn't have wide range of life experiences; and how to handle practical things on the job such as climbing up the ladder and fixing the lights.

In summary, the visible minority female principals had similar personal challenges of not having enough time with their family members, conflict between work and home, having no time to do what they wanted to do such as spending more time with their husbands, mothers, or sick daughters, as well as making some time for fun. Besides these personal challenges, visible minority female principals also faced professional challenges which will be discussed in the next section.

Professional Challenges

The visible minority female principals faced challenges in their professional lives. Six challenges that were common to the participants can be titled: (a) loneliness; (b) teachers; (c) students; (d) parents; (e) instructional leadership; and (f) school. Even for the same challenge there are differences among the five participants due to each school's specific site, situation, location, community background, and participants' personal experiences. The similar professional challenges will be presented first followed by the differences.

Loneliness. The participants commented on the loneliness of the principalship. Three of the participants stated that a principal's position is quite a lonely job on a day-to-day basis. Carol believed, “. . . you're not included in the staff room conversations all the time and you want people to feel free and you just have to be wary of developing lopsided relationships with your staff” (C. I. p. 18). Ann thought, “It's not just the women that find it lonely. I think it's a lonely position . . . You have to find that balance

of being really friendly with your staff, but still retaining some authority” (A. I. p. 26).

Betty felt very lonely in her first principal position because that school was predominantly a female staff, and many of them were in the middle or at the end of their careers. The women tended to be competitive with each other. Betty said her present school displays very strong team work so she did not feel lonely at all. However, both Eva and Darlene agreed the principal position could be lonely, but because they formed networks and connections, and build relationships, they have never felt lonely.

Teachers. Teachers and staff members also present a professional challenge for these visible minority female principals. Teachers’ work attitudes and qualities were important factors which influenced these principals in their school administration job. Four participants in this study indicated that their teachers present six challenges for them. The first challenge is dealing with staff who are not team members and who are not willing to work as hard as the rest of the people. “They’re not doing the job that they should be doing . . . and sometimes you get complaints about them” (A. I. p. 26). Second, when there are new staff members, it is a long process for principals to supervise and to write out appraisals for them. Third, finding a balance of how much to push teachers who are nearing retirement, who don’t care to improve their teaching style, and continue to teach the same old way was a challenge for the participants in this study. The fourth challenge is working with the staff placed in the school and “how can you [principals] get them to do more than just seeing it [teaching] as a job . . . they [teachers] have to look beyond the monetary motivation aspect” (E. I. p. 15). Principals are challenged in guiding the staff to look at the children as little people they’d really like to be interacting with. However, not all the teachers will feel that way because of

their own family background, the different ages, different career stages, as well as their health, energy, and motivation.

Fifth, one participant mentioned that some male teachers have a hard time sometimes accepting her authority as a principal, especially at the beginning, so she worked hard to get people to trust her. Finally, one participant had experienced a professional challenge dealing with staffs who were the wives of other principals or superintendents. The pressure coming from these staff members came when the participant made a decision, and these wives would say their husbands would do it like this or that. In addition, these staff felt that because their spouses were principals or superintendents, they should be given special considerations, special concessions in terms of being able to spend money to pursue a project or leave the school early.

Students. The third professional challenge for visible minority female principal was the students. For Darlene, the biggest challenge is dealing with the aggression of some of the students on the school playground. Darlene described it as a real self-centered kind of aggression and she is working together with her staff to develop a strong school discipline policy. Eva felt that her challenge was in providing proper education to (a) students who come from stable home environments in which they feel they are being loved and taken care of, who are emotionally prepared to learn, and (b) students who come from broken homes and who experience family upheaval, and who are under lots of stress. Eva identified the challenge of teaching her students how to select available information because if students have not been taught the skills of reasoning and what information is credible and what is not, they may be at risk.

Parents. The data indicated that participants faced many challenges in dealing with the parents in their schools. Darlene's challenges lay in the aggressive parents who

make excuses for their children and blame everybody else. Her school is in a very affluent community where parents have high positions; they think they have the right to accuse, blame and control the school. Darlene faced the challenge of “. . . trying to get the parents to stop trying to run the school” (D. I. p. 21).

Ann also faced challenges from her students’ parents. In her first principalship there were some parents, mostly men, who did not accept a woman, and especially a coloured woman, as a principal. Ann had to work very hard to build a relationship with them. Eva’s challenge with the parents is to guide them to support their children, monitor their work, and look at a different way of learning other than the model with which they grew up.

Instructional leadership. The fifth challenge the visible minority principals faced is related to instructional leadership. A principal’s administrative responsibilities consist of guiding, instructing, and leading. Each participant faces different challenges in terms of their daily routine work because of their different situations. Eva believes that one of her roles is to find ways to support the staff to become better teachers so they will be willing to take risks, and embrace new approaches in the area of teaching, engaging students in learning, and instructional methodologies.

Betty’s challenge is finding time to implement the new curricula. She explained:

There are lots of new curricula that the province is setting out for teachers, to present in a classroom [for a principal] that takes time. We are encouraged to be educational leaders and instructional leaders in the classroom, and it’s hard to do that as well as of the administrative work that you need to do. You feel more like an office manager than an instructional leader. That’s a challenge. I don’t have time to go into a classroom and help them [teachers] out. I don’t have time to help them to plan lessons or help them to correct lessons. (B. I. p. 17)

Ann’s challenge is constantly learning new things to make her administrative work more up-to-date. She said she has lots to learn because when she had only taught

one subject area, she had to learn other curricula, the whole sporting world, and the different cultures of the school.

School. The last professional challenge for these visible minority female principals was related to school location and culture. Because of the different sites of the schools and the communities in which these schools are located, these principals face different challenges in terms of their specific school administration jobs. Both Darlene and Carol faced the challenge of decreasing student enrolment. In addition, Carol is facing the unique challenge of building a traditional school. As a result, the responsibility for developing curricula and standards, and building the new vision and code of conduct all have been put on Carol's shoulders. Carol claims this responsibility is exciting and stimulating but heavy because she only works four days a week. As a result, she is trying to get it all done but sometimes she feels she is getting behind in what she considers should be accomplished.

For Betty, money is a big challenge because the neighbourhood in which her school is located is in the inner city. There is a breakfast and a lunch program in the school for students. Fund raising is hard in this community compared with a richer one so Betty's school has to rely on donations from businesses to find such experiences such as camping, canoeing, or skiing. Helping the students from the poor families, and trying to find more money for this is the challenge for Betty.

Ann's administrative career will come to an end this year. Her job challenges so far are some projects related to the school facility that she wants to see completed. She has a list of things to finish up now and she has to make sure they get finished. She also joked about how to exit gracefully, making sure that things are in place before she leaves.

In summary, the second theme that emerged from the second research question was related to the challenges that visible minority female principals face in their principalships: loneliness, difficult staffs, students, high demanding parents, instructional leadership, and school issues. The researcher found it interesting that different school settings have different staff compositions and teams which have a direct impact on the staff climate and environment. One participant mentioned that if there are male staff members in the school, female staff behaved better. In asking the participants which is easier for them to build relationships with, male or female staff, they all indicated it depends on the type of staff. Of special interest to the researcher are the challenges that one participant faced from staff members who were wives of principals and superintendents who thought they merited special treatment and privileges based on their personal relationships to people in authority. Two participants admitted that some male staff members and some parents frequently have difficulty accepting a visible minority female principal as someone in authority in the school. None of the participants indicated that they were expected to do more work than a man would do in the same position.

From the data collected, it was easy for the researcher to see that under the title of principal, these visible minority female principals have to face professional challenges associated with the principal position. However, these professional challenges were viewed as opportunities by these participants, enabling them to display their abilities, to have a chance to put into practice their philosophy of education, as well as helping to achieve their dream of becoming a principal and educational leader.

Organizational Challenges

The data indicated that the participants encountered fewer than anticipated organizational challenges in their principal positions. Three of the five participants didn't share their organizational challenges with the researcher. The organizational challenge for two of the participants is when staff does not get along and don't like each other, often the teachers' union becomes involved. The participants said that they would like to be able to have more control in determining the whole climate or culture of the school. Betty stated, ". . . a principal can't select her own team or players" (B. I. p. 17), while Eva commented, "Sometimes a principal can't do anything to the teachers because some things are beyond my control, and because the union is a very powerful support for the teachers" (E. I. p. 16).

In summary, there were no organizational challenges identified by three participants in this study, and the other two participants shared a similar organizational challenge related to staff members and their support by the teacher unions.

Race and Gender

Three different opinions concerning race and gender were expressed. First, one participant doesn't think of race and gender as negative factors. Second, two of the participants believed that race and gender were challenges in their principal position. The challenges especially came from the students' parents. As Ann and Darlene commented:

I think that they [race and gender] do sometimes have a negative impact. There's no question in my mind that especially when I go to a new school, the parents and community, I think often . . . see you're a female principal, especially they see you're a visible minority female principal, they treat you differently a little bit . . . probably get more challenges . . . than the male principals do . . . I think after a while after the community accepts you and you have a reputation in the

community I think that changes but it takes a while. It takes longer than for a male principal. (A. I. p. 47)

I think there are people who can't work under women. And I still think there are people who can't or have a difficult time accepting leadership from a different ethnic background . . . some men don't like to be told by women and they won't look at me as a principal. I've a parent, white male, who . . . talks down to me and so I have to stand up taller, and [ask] myself, "What would any principal do with a guy that comes in angry?" You know, I can't let him intimidate me just because he thinks I'm Asian and female. So I have to stand up stronger and say I may look Asian, I may be female, but I'm still principal of this school. (D. I. p. 44, p. 46)

Differences in norms and expectations related to race and gender are sometimes revealed in the manner in which parents from different ethnic-cultural communities or backgrounds relate to the school. Darlene shared an experience in which a parent who came from a southern European ethnic group claimed that her cultural background gave her the right to challenge Darlene and to address her in a quite impolite manner. Darlene learned from this incident that she wouldn't let a negative impact affect her, and that she had to be very confident in herself and in her leadership abilities. That's why Darlene viewed herself as mainstream because she cannot view herself as Asian or female because of the way some people will view it as a negative. Darlene thinks she has to view herself as a principal first, not female or Asian.

The other two participants in this study indicated that they did not want race and gender to become a negative impact for them. They tried to learn to see things from a positive rather than a negative perspective. Eva claimed that:

Even I, myself, represent a racial group. I . . . represent a gender, but when you are dealing with people, they are coming from all genders; I mean both male and female genders, also from different cultural and racial backgrounds. And so what you need to look at . . . [and operate] from a set of belief systems that the main stream holds, otherwise it would not be a fair process. It would not be a just process. I do not want it to have any negative impact on me because if you stop to interpret everything from those points of view, you cannot operate, you cannot survive, because it would be so negative. (E. I. p. 40)

Betty chose to look at race and gender differently because of her very biased experiences in her younger years when she lived in a small town in England. She said:

If there've been any negative instances in my lifetime because I've been a female or because I've been a woman of color, I think I've learned and grown from it. And so that made me stronger and so I don't think I can call it negative. I think it's something that I've learned from . . . I understand that all of that, there was a reason and a cause for that, and I've grown on it. It's been a good learning experience for me; it's made me the person I am today. And I'm quite proud of that. (B. I. pp. 35-36)

In summary, race and gender did bring challenges for all five participants in their principal job. Challenges came from their students' parents or male staff members. The participants express differences of opinions about the impact of race and gender. However, they have learned to accept the fact that race and gender are challenges in their work that they need to always deal with.

Accent and Related Discrimination

All five visible minority female principal participants in this study came from Asian ethnic back grounds and four of them claimed they spoke English without an accent. They believed that speaking English with an accent for a visible minority female principal could be a challenge in their role as a principal. They believed they would be treated differently if they spoke English with an accent compared with how they are treated now. They believed that the challenges would be manifested in four ways: (a) people will speak more loudly and more slowly in anticipation that you might be not able to understand them; (b) speaking English with a foreign accent definitely is not viewed by people as being attractive, even if the words are pronounced properly. People make fun of the way you speak; (c) if a female principal has a strong accent, it seems people tend to not be very patient rather than taking time and learning about the person and trying to understand. People are just very standoffish; and (d) if you have an accent,

it might take a little longer until people get to know you, especially if they have to listen a little harder. Some people do take the time to do that and some people won't.

Only one participant in this study indicated she spoke English with a non-Canadian accent. She did not regard this as a challenge. She stated:

Obviously, I speak with an accent. There's no question about that. I think the students recognize that, parents recognize that, staff recognizes that as well. If a person speaks with an English accent, does it mean that that person is less? I think ultimately it's not so much the accent that is the critical part; what is critical is the ability to communicate. Lots of people speak with an accent, with a French accent, but that is not important. What is important is the clarity of the communication. What is important is the person who is doing the job as a principal, their competency in running a school, their competency in nurturing children, their competency in raising the achievement level of the students, their competency in developing in the children a sense of value, a sense of social responsibility. (E. I. p. 31)

Participant Darlene defined two discriminations related to accent: *visual discrimination* and *oral discrimination*. She gave two examples of the two accent-related discriminations she witnessed that happened to others. First is visual discrimination and the second is oral discrimination. Darlene said:

The boy in my school from Fiji had a strong British accent, but his accent, even though he was a black boy, his accent was British, gave him an appearance of a higher culture, of more intelligence whereas the Korean boy spoke with a strong Asian accent, and peoples' minds about the Asian, you know Asian people, I don't think they give them as much respect as if they had a British accent. (D. I. pp. 33-34)

... in the mind of the white person, the Caucasian, the Asian accent brings back that picture [history of Asian people in Canada] to their mind. I worked for a man that is a Chinese-Japanese fellow. He was the top researcher in the forestry company I worked for before, a very bright man, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for forestry research. Doctor was his title, a PhD. He's a doctor in his title ... but when people came to see him, he never used Dr. because he's very humble himself. But he has a very strong Chinese accent and when people would come and meet with him, sometimes I would get really upset with them because they would talk down to him. I would always call him Dr. Chow ... and then that would change their attitudes, because the title would make a difference too. So add the Dr. title and then they overlooked his accent. But when they listened

first to him on the phone I don't think he got that kind of respect at first. I think it is oral discrimination. (D. I. pp. 34-35)

Darlene also shared a story that happened to her friend who came from her home country. When they were together one day, her friend received a call from a person who came from their home country as well. Because Darlene's friend spoke English with an accent, the person began to talk down to her. Darlene heard that, grabbed the telephone, and talked with that person. That person changed his attitude immediately because he thought Darlene was a real Canadian. Darlene believed that even people who come from a common homeland also discriminate against people who speak with an accent. This discrimination is not related to race or color because the people Darlene mentioned share the same race and colour; it is pure accent discrimination or oral discrimination. Because the people on the telephone did not see Darlene, they assumed she was a white Canadian because she had no accent when she spoke English.

In short, the participants recognized that accent could be a challenge for visible minority female principals. Four of the participants who claimed no accent when they spoke English thought that if they had an accent, it would be a challenge and affect their role as principal. However, the one participant who indicated she spoke with an accent thought that accent was not very important as long as one had competency and was qualified for the principal position. She pointed out the key is to have clear communication and be understood by others. None of the participants acknowledged personally experienced accent-related discrimination.

Summary of Themes Related to Research Question #2: What Are the Challenges Visible Minority Female Principals Experienced in Their Role as School Principals?

On the basis of the information shared by the participants, visible minority female principals in this study faced similarities and differences in terms of personal challenges, professional challenges, organizational challenges, gender and race, and accent in their principal position. Personal challenges that were mentioned were health, time, and work style. The professional challenges that were identified as being important included the loneliness of the principalship, teachers, students, parents, instructional leadership, and matters related to maintaining and running the school. Organizational challenges were staff disagreements, teacher union involvement in school matters, and the inability of principals to have the final say in staff selection.

There was no clear consensus on the matter of the influence of race and gender on the principalship. Some of the participants had to deal with discrimination from parents. Some of the participants have learned to adopt a positive outlook and not allow race and gender to affect the way in which they interact with others. One participant does not feel that race and gender are negative factors. The participants stated that ability and competency are the important criteria for their work.

Four of the participants do not speak English with an accent but believe accent could be a problem for a principal. The one participant who spoke English with an accent didn't regard this as challenge in her work. The important things were competency and being qualified, and clarity of communication. No accent related discrimination was perceived in the five participants' administrative work life. The participants felt these challenges brought them opportunities, and helped them to demonstrate their administrative abilities, to broaden their views, to cope with these

challenges, strengthened their will, and helped them to develop their unique leadership strategies to build a better and more effective school environment.

Themes Related to Research Question #3: What Strategies Do Visible Minority

Female Principals Used to Make Their Schools More Inclusive?

Four strategies which the participants used to make their schools more inclusive emerged from the data on this research question: (a) making the most of attributes and abilities; (b) seeking support systems; (c) the contribution of minority status; and (d) ways to build an inclusive school.

Making the Most of Attributes and Abilities

These visible minority female principals indicated their attributes and abilities served as the foundation for their leadership position and helped them to develop their own style of building an inclusive school environment. Five attributes and abilities were identified. These included: (a) a clear vision; (b) creating a positive learning environment; (c) a strong sense of confidence in decision making and problem solving; (d) love of students; (e) good mediation skills. Their common abilities and skills as revealed in the data are summarized below.

A clear vision. All the participants indicated that they had a very clear vision of where they were, where they wanted to go, and what the steps were that they required to achieving their school's goals. All the participants discussed the big picture for their schools as well as a very clear philosophy of education which focused on the students. When talking about her inverted pyramid style of leading, Darlene was quick to assert that:

It doesn't mean I don't have a vision. I still have the vision that we're going for. But I think it's not just telling everyone what to do; it's sharing the vision and then helping them to reach the vision. (D. I. p. 44)

Eva, in talking about her vision, stated, “. . . I have a very clear vision of what a good school should be . . . I think I know very clearly where I can take them . . .” (E. I. p. 20)

Creating a positive learning environment. All the participants agreed that they had the knowledge, capability, and experience to develop curricula, empower students’ learning, adapt learning to create the best learning opportunities for students of all ability levels, create a wonderful learning environment for students and staff, motivate people to work hard at the school, and encourage staff members to develop their own strengths. In the words of one of the participants, “I do have the capacity to bring energy to learning. So students always feel enthusiastic about what they’re exploring and doing. I think in that process you’re really empowering the students to learn” (E. I. p. 20).

Strong sense of confidence in decision making and problem solving. The data indicated that all the participants believe they have strong decision-making and problem-solving skills. The participants indicated that they could make hard decisions when they needed to, having confidence in themselves to do the right thing. Ann stated, “Sometimes you have to be very straightforward and say, ‘I’m sorry, but I still get to make this decision’” (A. I. p. 31).

Love of students. All the participants indicated that they cared about their students, have fun with them, listen to them, and connect with them. Darlene described her relationship with her students in this way:

I love students and I really want what’s best for them. And that’s, I think, one of the code of ethics for us as principals is to put that students first, and the best interest of the students. So I think because I love students, and I like relating to them, and I can talk to them at their level as well without being their buddy, I can be there. They know that I’m still their principal, so I can discipline them firmly and judiciously as if I were their parent. (D. I. p. 24)

Good mediation skills. The participants indicated that they often needed to act as mediators between parents and teachers. The principals tried with both parties to come to an agreement. Ann said, “It doesn’t always work, but it does most of the time” (A. I. p. 30). Darlene stated, “You don’t want to be too soft. So they walk all over you or push their way, or start demanding. You have to be willing to stand between that tough parent and their teacher to protect the integrity of your teacher and the staff as well” (D. I. p. 31).

Seeking Support Systems

The participants talked about a number of support systems that assisted them in making their schools inclusive communities. These supports came primarily from six sources: central office people, mentors, the principals’ association, school staff members, parent community, and family.

Central office personnel. Professional colleagues such as superintendents and other office members in their school districts offered advice and were good resources. Carol described the specific support she received from superintendents:

I have open communication with my assistant superintendents and superintendent. Just developing a good working relationship with those around me, and having a few trusted colleagues that I can exchange information and concerns with . . . and to laugh with them is very helpful. (C. I. pp. 16-17)

Darlene stated:

If I need somebody to talk to, if I have a problem, I can give them a call. [I can] see how they did things . . . I also have my superior who is the assistant superintendent, who is also very easy to call if I need to bounce things off of. I can call them and they will help me with a lot of issues, especially, if it comes to school protection, or legal issues, or a very tough parent, for example, a very touchy situation. (D. I. p. 17)

Mentors. The visible minority female principals all indicated they had mentors. The district office provided mentors for these visible minority female principals when

they began to take on their principal roles. Two of the participants described the mentorship process in this manner:

. . . this person [the mentor] would come and visit us [the new principals], and connect with us. And as far as we have questions he would have an answer, and he would come out to the school and help us. (E. I. p. 13)

They also put a mentor in place for us [the new principals], and she [the mentor] is an incredible administrator with lots of experience . . . every month she would send us a heads-up for October or a heads-up for November so then you would know what was coming and what things you should look out for, like you should get your newsletter out by this time or start preparing for the Christmas concert, order those chairs . . . She was really maintain an open door policy with e-mails and phone calls and all of those things. She's a tremendously dedicated woman. (C. I. p. 16)

Principals' association. Another support that the participants received came from their principals' association. There were different kinds of leadership training and study groups which the principals' association organized so that they had the opportunity to discuss things and learn from each other. In addition, the benefits and support these visible minority female principals received from the principals' group were described as follows:

We have a very strong principals' group and I can pick up the phone and talk to any one of my colleagues if I need assistance or if I have questions so they support me. (B. I. p. 15)

The administrative organization I belong to is really quite supportive. I know I can phone a few principals around. I would say they're my peer group coaches. And we kind of peer coach each other . . . To me that's the best kind of support, especially when you're the only administrator in a school. You have to be careful that you don't bounce too many things off your own staff because they're still your subordinates. So I have to find somebody that's safe that I can bounce ideas off, or get them to ask me questions so I can be more clear with my thinking. (D. I. p. 17)

I have a few colleagues that are also fairly new to being principals and we've developed a very open, caring and kind of mutually beneficial relationship. We'll share letters, newsletters, information, paperwork, things that need to be done, have a laugh, share experiences, figure out ways to deal with parents and

problems and situations and it's a very wonderful way of being able to relieve stress in a professional community. (C. I. p. 17)

School staff members. The individual school staffs also supported the principals.

All participants gave high praise to their staff teams. Ann stated:

I think when you spend time making those relationships they become really good support . . . for example right now while I'm going through all this with my sick daughter . . . I've got people coming in saying, "You know, how are you doing?" . . . bringing me food and saying you haven't had lunch today . . . you need to have some lunch and you know that's very supportive . . . I know any time I can go out there and talk to someone or run things by them . . . and say I need this or I need that and they'll do whatever they can to help me out. So I think people are my greatest support. (A. I. p. 18)

While Betty believed:

The teachers and the staff are also very supportive. They're a really strong team so if I need something to be done, it's done right away. So they're very supportive and they're very positive and so I think that helps me in my role. It makes it a little bit easier so I don't have to fight with people to get things done you know. (B. I. p. 15)

Parent community. The parent community is another source of support. The participants agreed that for the most part, their parent communities were very supportive in fund raising, in all kinds of school activities, and in volunteer work. Parents played an important role in each of their schools. As Eva stated:

Because I truly believe that they are partners in the whole process. I can't do it on my own, neither could a teacher. Because we only have the students for five hours a day. The rest of the days are at home. So they [parents] play a pivotal role in supporting the values of the school. (E. I. p. 20)

Family. Family members such as the husband, children, and parents were also a source of support. Husbands supported the participants by providing them with advice, opinions, encouragement, and understanding, and also shared household duties which allowed the participants to work late or long hours at their respective schools. Their parents also helped by providing financial help and taking care of their children. Their

children's supports were in the way of understanding their mother's job and helping their mothers with their school activities.

To summarize, these participants described a variety of supports which they received which assisted them in fulfilling their role as a principal, and to better serve their school and community. Besides the supports they received, their minority status also played an important role which will be discussed in the next section.

The Contribution of Minority Status

All five participants' heritage is Asian. Although they indicated they seldom thought of themselves as a member of a visible minority group, they all admitted that the fact of their visible minority status was an important factor assisting them to build an inclusive school environment. The participants identified five benefits that resulted from their visible minority status: (a) seeing things from a different perspective; (b) understanding students and their cultures; (c) a tendency to be more inclusive; (d) providing encouragement as a role model; and (e) new thoughts and hope.

Seeing things from a different perspective. All the participants indicated that their minority status is a strength bringing a richness and difference to society, and enabling them to bring their perspectives to the school community. These principals regarded their visible minority status as an asset in their work life and personal life, and helped them to become what they are today. The participants commented about their heritage. Eva stated:

People's differences are seen as strengths, where people's different cultural backgrounds are seen as an element to bring about richness in the community, if the cultural experience is seen as an asset in looking at solving global issues. Because nowadays the issues we are dealing with are not just confined to Canada. The issues we are dealing with are global in nature. And that requires groups of people bringing their strengths and their cultural background in working together in solving the problems. (E. I. p. 34)

While Ann believed:

Because my background is different and everything I bring to the job is different . . . I think when you're a visible minority yourself, you understand that sometimes you don't see things the same because you've seen it yourself, experienced it yourself. (A. I. p. 42, p. 44)

Darlene commented:

My minority status definitely helped me relate to the students who have come from the third world country or other countries where the education system is different. I think my experiences with many different cultures and having grown up in a different ethnic circle was an asset. (D. I. p. 35, p. 39)

Understanding the students and their cultures. As school principals, all the participants confirmed that their minority status led to a deeper and better understanding of their students, especially minority, immigrant, and refugee students, and their cultures. As well, the participants also extended their understanding and help to the students' parents and became a bridge to connect teachers and parents. Darlene reflected:

My minority heritage helped me understand our minority students and their expectation, and even the way they respect the teachers and the cultures. It helps me understand that better. For example, Asians, out of respect, don't look you in the eye. Women and children especially won't look you in the eye. When they come here to North American schools, the western schools, they'll say, they'll make, they'll force them to look them in the eye. They'll say you're not listening, come on and look me in the eye. It's very hard for them because it's not what we do. That's our culture; it helps me understand their culture . . . and how they relate to authority and how I could talk to their parents too, and the struggles that their parents might be having or in fitting in right . . . how their students might have struggles in fitting in coming from another culture. (D. I. p. 36)

Ann gave an example of assistance to a family:

There were a couple of girls [students] of Muslim origin in my school. Their father is a doctor here in town and their younger brothers were at an elementary school in the system . . . There were some issues there about the son and the father felt that there was some discrimination going on. He'd [received] a letter about his son's behavior . . . and just asked if I would help him out. So, I helped him with that situation and he was very happy about that. At that time, I thought . . . being from a different culture really helped in this situation. (A. I. p. 28)

Betty believed being an immigrant helped her understand others:

... I think because I emigrated to Canada and I lived in England and I traveled through Europe I think it's easier for me to try and understand somebody else's viewpoint. Such as: I had a Pakistani family, the mom phoned me first and she said I'm taking my kids out of school at the end of March we're going back to Pakistan for four months, they will be in school there but I still need work for them. You know she was so scared that they would fail and when they came back in the fall that they would be kept back and I tried to explain to her that that's not going to happen just you make sure that they stay in school because you want them to keep their study habits. I spent 15 minutes on the telephone with her. Later she came to school. She said my husband tells me I have to come and get homework. I have to make sure my kids don't fail. But, when I went to the three teachers to explain the situation to them they couldn't understand why they need homework when they're going to be in school? So I think that's one I understood what she meant because my family would have done the same thing. (B. I. pp. 20-21)

A tendency to be more inclusive. All the participants indicated that their background and experiences of living in different countries gave them a broader understanding of the richness of different cultures, and the importance of diversity led them to tend to be more inclusive in their school community and in their daily administrative life. Carol shared her experience of inclusion with a Korean family who wanted their child to come to her school as an exchange student:

This Korean family e-mailed me and wanted their child to come to my school . . . in my e-mail I said we're looking forward to having your child come to my school and become part of the school family. The mother's reaction was amazing. She said, "No one has sent anything like that to us before, to be part of the family, we are very excited about it. (C. I. p. 42)

Darlene celebrated diversity in her school by arranging for a variety of multicultural programs in the school. She explained that:

Because we don't have a lot of diversity in this school, I think with my [belonging to] a minority group I'm able to introduce [children to new experiences]. So we've brought in the Watoto Children's Choir from Uganda. We've brought in the Mukatano Canadian Black community to do presentations with our kids. So I'm always aware of what maybe our children need to see to break them out of the closed world [they live in]. (D. I. p. 22)

For Betty, her childhood experiences always made her want to be in a school with a rich cultural representation that was more inclusive. Her experiences influenced her efforts in building an inclusive learning environment in her school community. As she indicated:

We try very hard at our school to be inclusive and to understand. And I think that made me more sensitive to other cultures needs and made me want to participate in and be part of something that was more inclusive. And I remember thinking when I was growing up as a child I was the only coloured person in that little primary school. And I always wished that I had been in a school where there had been lots of different cultures. So I think you learn a lot more when you're surrounded by variety . . . And I feel that I have a desire to learn more and to be inclusive, and to share cultural kinds of things. And am I proficient at it, maybe not yet but I continue to work at it. (B. I. p. 33)

Providing encouragement as a role model. Being visible minority female principals, the five participants all mentioned that their physical appearance comforted many visible minority students in their schools who recently immigrated to Canada or who were exchange students. Students and parents felt comfortable dealing with the visible minority female principals. The data also indicated that the participants served as role models to encourage visible minority students to seek opportunities toward their future success. The following quotations illustrate this:

I think when they see that there's an Asian principal, I think that helps them. (D. I. p. 22)

[When minority students' parents] come into the building . . . they just come straight to me. (B. I. p. 21)

[Being a visible minority person helps] students from other countries see you playing a leadership role. They feel . . . affirmed in their mind that anything is possible. (E. I. p. 17)

So I think when visible minority people get positions of leadership, I think their own communities see . . . it is possible [as] a minority [person] to get somewhere and I think it's important for those kids to have those role models so I take that responsibility very seriously. I think that makes me feel proud. (A. I. p. 43)

New thoughts and hope. Serving as role models and encouragement to their students and their community, the five participants were also inspired by the American President Obama who brought new hope for all visible minorities who strive for leadership positions and better opportunities in the future. Carol recalled:

When Obama became President, it really became a reality for anybody who is of colour to understand that in fact all of the doors have opened. And when I was a child, I never thought I could be on TV. I never thought I could be a writer or any of those things because you didn't see anybody of colour doing those things. And now you see them everywhere doing everything in every walk of life. So I think it's made my awareness of my minority status come much more to the forefront . . . when I was a little girl I never thought that I could be a principal because all the principals around me were white. But now I know I can and you can do whatever you want. And it doesn't matter what you look like. It just matters what you are like. And I use it very much in our philosophy at school . . . to grow up into a very good human being no matter what. And just to remember you can do whatever . . . It's very uplifting to realize that my children can live in a world where colour has no role in their success. (C. I. p. 21)

Eva reflected on the significance of Obama's election in this way:

So just like Barack Obama [who is] black, or at least a half black, [and became] the president of the United States, basically [this event is] an affirmation for people who are visible minorities that they can fulfill their dreams . . . they need to take the steps to reach [their goals]. (E. I. p. 17)

Ann expressed her thoughts and hope in this way:

[When] I think about the Black situation in the states, if somebody would have said to me a couple of years ago there was going to be a Black president I would have said no way, it just is not possible. I don't think that society is ready for this yet. And so it gave me some hope that maybe we're getting to the point of looking at who people are, looking at leaders as to their qualifications and not race or anything like that. I see things like Obama becoming president, or even that whole debate makes me feel good that it's ongoing: And that we are getting somewhere, even though maybe not as fast as I would like. (A. I. p. 54)

Betty reminisced about Obama's inauguration:

I think that's really an exciting time and it says a lot about our world today compared to 30 years ago or 20 years ago. [I told the students] it was really an important time and some of our older students actually watched [Obama's] inauguration. This is pretty dynamic that we get a person of color whose going to

be leading what is supposed to be the world's greatest power. This really encouraged all of us. (B. I. p. 40)

In conclusion, the experiences of the five visible minority principals deepened their understanding of their students' cultural diversity to understand and support both students and their parents. Based on the foundation of their skills, the supports they received, and the contribution of their minority status, these principals use their strategies to build inclusive school environments which are discussed in the next section.

Ways to Build an Inclusive School

Data from the interviews and documentation showed that these visible minority female principals used six specific ways to create an inclusive learning environment. These were: (a) to deliver a clear mission statement; (b) to lead effectively; (c) to develop reciprocal empowerment; (d) to model an ethic of care; (e) to mentor and network; and (f) to master necessary knowledge.

A clear mission statement. School documents revealed that all five participants' schools developed clear mission statements for their schools which provided direction for the school environment they wanted to build. The five school missions were:

Darlene's School Mission Statement:

Because we believe children need the support of school, home and community, we will work together to ensure a safe, challenging and respectful environment, which nurtures individual potential, promotes responsible citizenship and encourages an enthusiasm for life-long learning. (D. D. p. 1)

Carol's School Mission Statement:

We, the students, parents, and staff of our school, are a community of learners committed to pursuing personal excellence, creating a caring, positive, learning environment, promoting respect for ourselves, others, and this place. (C. D. p. 1)

Eva's School Mission Statement:

To provide a safe, supportive community that fosters a love of learning, a commitment to individual excellence, and a respectful, caring response to our world. (E. D. p. 1)

Betty's School Mission Statement:

A learning community that is caring, committed to celebrating diversity, and respected for its focus on learning. (B. D. p. 1)

Ann's School Mission Statement:

Strives to create a positive and safe school environment that empowers students personally, socially and academically. Chargers value honour, which involves conducting one's life with honesty, fairness, courtesy, integrity and sincerity. Chargers value respect for self, for others and for property. Chargers value service beyond self. (A. D. p. 1)

All five school mission statements showed that student achievement, value building, a good learning environment, as well as community building are important and the focus for these five participants in their leadership roles.

Leadership styles. The second way in which these visible minority female principals built their inclusive school learning environments was through varied leadership styles. The leadership styles the participants claimed they used can be summarized as inclusive leadership, transformative leadership, distributive leadership, servant leadership, and moral leadership. Some participants used these leadership styles in different ways or used different names to talk about them; others described their leadership styles by using metaphors. The researcher sensed that although some of the leadership styles used by the participants weren't mentioned in the interviews, they showed up in their school documents.

Inclusive leadership. All five participants mentioned they used an inclusive leadership style. Ann and Betty used inclusive leadership in their decision making.

Ann's inclusive style was expressed in a collaborative manner whereas Betty's inclusive leadership style was used in a democratic style. Betty said, "I like to include everybody in the decision making process as much as possible" (B. I. p. 22). Both Ann and Betty give their staff trust and freedom to be part of the decision making process. Darlene described her inclusive leadership as including everybody in everything in the school and school community. For Carol, her inclusive leadership style revealed itself in asking all the members, including students, questions about how the school was functioning.

Eva believed that her distributive leadership was really inclusive leadership. When she said inclusion, she meant involving everyone. She always made a conscious effort to thank the staff which included teachers and other staff members. Meanwhile, she also promoted student leadership and gave the students a voice, trying to make them feel that they belong. Eva thought it was not just her school but it was everybody's school. The school belonged to the school community and the school community was part of the school.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership was also highlighted by the five participants. Ann said she chose the best person for the situation and let them be in charge. She believed "a leader should never be under the assumption that they're the best of everything at everything that they do. You may be a good leader because you have good people there to work with" (A. I. p. 30). Betty stated she acted as a role model to her teachers and to her students and indicated that she had a lot of younger teachers who watched her do things, asked for advice on how to change things, and managed things like her.

Darlene's transformational leadership came from her metaphor of being coach and conductor of her school. She said that she took what the staff had already and tried to move them to a place of growth, and get them to reflect on their teaching practice. The school newsletter showed Darlene's transformational leadership style and the diversity of cultures she brought into her school, different cultural festivals and the exchange in which the school was included. Carol's leadership focused on her metaphor of being:

. . . a chair that you [teachers, staff, and students] sit on and that will comfort and support you, but will also push you up when needed. And I also think my leadership style is to work harder than anybody in my building and to lead by example and to make sure that . . . they feel [teachers, staff, and students] supported. (C. I. p. 21)

For Eva, transformational leadership is connected with change. She thought it was very important for a principal to bring about transformation and to look for change, and to bring about a meaningfully challenging learning experience for all students. She explained that she was always looking to promote teachers who can see the value of being involved in that change process. She hoped that the transformational process comes from each of the individual teachers.

Other leadership styles. Besides the inclusive and transformational leadership styles, Eva and Darlene talked about two additional kinds of leadership: moral leadership and servant leadership. Eva indicated that moral leadership focused on providing her students with opportunities to try new things and made her school a place where the students feel that they belong. Eva believed students should feel that they are responsible in helping to create a positive school environment.

Darlene described herself as being a servant leader. She regarded her job in terms of an inverted pyramid. Instead of her being at the top, she was at the bottom to make

sure she was giving the teachers what they needed so that they could serve the students. Her focus was to meet the teachers' needs and cited a quotation *feed the teachers, so they don't eat the children*.

Reciprocal empowerment. The participants mentioned that they empowered their staff members by trusting them and giving them freedom to make some of their own decisions and try new things. The reciprocal empowerment practiced by these principals also included empowering their staff members in their professional development, being a mentor for them, and involving staff in decision making. Staff members in turn helped the principal to build an effective school by being stronger in their teaching, giving their opinions in different programs, and being actively involved in school affairs. However, the specific ways of using their reciprocal empowerment varied due to each participant's own school situation.

Ann started from a position of trust in the people on her team and assumed that every person on the team will do their job. She empowered her staff to do their job and make decisions in their areas. She said her staff was also willing to help her do more things. Ann gave an example:

In our school, we have the committees . . . when the committees meet [they] have the power because that's the way the committee structure is set up. They have the power to make the decisions . . . instead of having to pass it through me they have to pass it through the rest of the staff. And if the staff decides that this is what we're going to do, I'm only one vote. What I do is that sometimes I have to tell them things they may not have thought of . . . Sometimes I have my input that way, but when it comes right down to the vote they still make the decision. (A. I. p. 46)

Betty said that she did her best to try to encourage and empower those around her: educational assistants, teachers and students. She believed that staff feel the more inclusive a principal is in terms of giving them power to be part of something that

decision making process to participate in things, the stronger the team will be. Betty also did her best to empower her staff by supporting professional development identified by staff and providing resources. Betty described empowerment as a win-win strategy for everyone: “Alternately when my staff is happy and they come back and tell me nice things about my practice it makes me feel really good, and it makes me want to work even harder. That’s a two way street.” (B. I. p. 35)

Darlene stated she encouraged and empowered her staff to develop their own professional development plans. She offered them suggestions. Secondly, she mentored teachers who wanted to pursue a leadership position. She explained:

There’s a fellow who I mentored because I knew he wants to make it up to being a principal. So by taking him under my wing, showing him, sharing with him . . . I would call him into my office, and say you want to know about this. When we had a big parent issue, I invited him to the meeting so that he could support his colleague, and in return, I think I have a stronger teacher on staff. And I can leave him to be teacher in charge and he’s much more comfortable doing it. (D. I. p. 42)

Carol explained that her reciprocal empowerment focused on teacher leaders and student leaders. Teacher leaders ran the literacy and Math. programs. Carol empowered students by “ . . . encouraging them to give back to the community, to do things that are their personal best, to really step beyond themselves, to show excellence, integrity and respect” (C. I. p. 45). In return, five of her students were selected to be honored at their community dinner. Carol stated, “I feel so very supported by my teachers. Everybody feels like in a way they have to help and support me” (C. I. p. 45).

Eva believed everyone in her school has the strength and ability to solve problems on his or her own. She empowered her teachers to develop student leadership for Kindergarten. Eva regarded herself just as a facilitator to make things happen in her school. By empowering people, she hoped everyone understands his or her role, “. . . and

know what to do to provide leadership. So that the whole school moves in the direction it's supposed to move" (E. I. p. 37).

Ethic of care. All the participants used different ways to show their ethic of care in their administrative work. Betty showed her ethic of care through a variety of supportive gestures. These included photocopying research articles that supported her teachers' teaching. She also ordered assessment for learning materials for each classroom as resources for teachers to use for their year-long professional development.

Carol revealed her ethic of care through personal touches and examples. She often rewarded teachers with a treat on special events. Carol worked long hours to make sure the teachers knew that she was there for them. Carol also made staff, including the custodians, aware of job opportunities in other schools. The following quotation reveals Carol's deep ethic of care:

There are three teachers in the school that will probably be laid off at the end of the year. I have sent them to workshops. I have provided P. D. [professional development] for them. I have provided training for them and personal support in their classroom to increase their capacity so that they gain experience . . . and make their jobs easier and more rewarding. (C. I. p. 46)

Darlene's ethic of care existed in her belief in educating the whole child [student]. She stated: "I truly believe educating the whole child [student], in educating the whole person, doing problem-solving . . . and looking at the issues, not as about the issue itself, but as the people that are having the issue" (D. I. p. 43). Darlene said that she really cared about the students and their needs in learning and about the staff and their professional development needs. She explained that her reversed pyramid leadership best exemplified her ethic of care. Instead of being on top, she was at the bottom to serve the teachers, to give them what they need, to help them, so that they can be the best to serve the students that they're teaching.

Ann's ethic of care was shown in her always considering her staff from their point of view. Being a principal, Ann is much more able to look at peoples' contexts.

Ann said:

. . . if their child is in assembly or if you have a sick child . . . if you [teachers and staff members] need to go to somebody's funeral, to me it doesn't matter if it's a family member or a relative, if it's somebody you feel need to be there for then you need to do that . . . we have to take care of those things . . . (A. I. p. 46).

She told teachers to make sure they arranged coverage for their classes and then to cover for each other because Ann believed that those were the things that were important for them to do. She believed that caring goes a long way.

Betty also connected her ethic of care with nurturing and appreciation. Her nurturing is about looking after her staff, supporting and caring about them, trying to provide the proper support for the staff so that everybody in the school is successful, and showing her appreciation and acknowledging all the good things that they do for the school. What Betty did was to write the staff little notes to thank them for things that they did. At monthly staff meetings, Betty would give roses to four staff members and thank them for all the things that they've done. Betty also did a lot of those things privately because she believed that teachers needed to know that their principal cared about them and that all their hard work was recognized and appreciated. Betty's ethic of care also showed in her nurturing and helping the students in the school.

Eva's ethic of care came from doing her best as a principal for her school. This means everyone knows what the school goals are and everyone knows that in fact they willingly work together as a team. It is obvious for Eva that she as a principal plays a major role in nurturing and guiding those practices. Eva believed that she had modeled her ethic of care in the whole process of carrying out her principal duties.

Being a mentor and networking. Being a mentor and networking were regarded as the important approaches by visible minority female principals to use to build an inclusive school. All the participants admitted they benefitted from their mentors whom they respected very much, and who were very knowledgeable, experienced, and supportive. They all found that mentors were so important for their leadership roles so they decided to become mentors for their teachers and others in the school system to help them to be successful in their present or future leadership positions.

All the participants regarded networking as an important activity in their administrative work. They indicated that a principal needed to have three kinds of networks: with other principals by often communicating, with the wider community by often listening, and with the school system central office by connecting. These principals explained that they received support from their principal colleagues through frequent networking and communicating with them. They relied on their wider community such as the parent community and community organizations to support their school by considering the advice they provided to the school. They needed to establish a good relationship with the central office because these principals needed advice or mentoring or coaching from them. They felt that networking with central office made their job easier.

Mastering necessary knowledge. The last way for visible minority female principals to build an inclusive school is to master necessary knowledge. The participants mentioned that all principals, not just visible minority female principals, need this necessary knowledge. The five things that principals require are a knowledge of good leadership and good leadership practices, a knowledge of effective communication, connections within and without the school, conflict resolution

techniques, and cultural knowledge because Canada is a multicultural society and more and more immigrant children are coming to school.

The ability to identify conflicts in the school and the skills for conflict resolution are essential to make win-win solutions. Ann gave a useful example of a win-win solution:

Because there's a conflict between a student and a teacher, and the parents get involved, quite often the parents don't know the whole story. They've only heard it from one side. And quite often the teachers don't know the whole story either, because they maybe don't know the kid as well . . . my goal always is to give each person a chance to speak so that they can explain their point of view. And I would say nine times out of 10 it's over . . . the parent will say, "Oh, now I get it." Or the teacher will say, "Now I understand." (A. I. p. 35)

From Ann's point of view, the key knowledge of a win-win solution was that you let both parties to the conflict feel good.

In conclusion, all five visible minority female principals indicated six ways which helped to manage their schools and build an inclusive school learning environment. However, the researcher believes that each school had its own special situation and background, and each participant had her own preferred strategies that were used to contribute to managing her school. In addition, all these female principals admitted that these strategies they used were not necessarily just for visible minority female principal but could be used by all principals.

Summary of Themes Related to Research Question #3: What Strategies Do Visible Minority Female Principals Use to Make Their Schools More Inclusive?

Each of the visible minority female principals in this study had both similar and different attributes and abilities which served as a necessary foundation for their administrative position. The attributes and abilities identified as necessary for the administrative job included having a clear vision, creating a positive learning

environment, having a strong sense of confidence in decision making and problem solving, a love of students, good mediation skills, and other qualities such as being able to multi-task, empathy, enthusiasm and joy, and good listening skills.

A number of support systems also helped the participants make their schools more inclusive. Central office personnel, mentors, the principals' association, school staff members, the parent community, and their families were important in this regard. Their minority status added an extra dimension to their leadership position, allowing them to see things from a different perspective, providing them with a better understanding of their students and their cultures, having a tendency to be more inclusive, and serving as a role model. The election of Barak Obama as President of the United States prompted the participants to talk about new thoughts and hope for visible minority people.

The participants identified six ways they used to build their inclusive schools. They had a clear mission statement, used a variety of leadership styles, practiced reciprocal empowerment, fostered an ethic of care, were mentors and developed networks, and mastered the knowledge and skills necessary to be a principal.

Before I conclude the summary of the data presentation and analysis about the three research questions, I would like to present some additional findings which I found were useful to help the readers to understand the participants and their work life experiences. There is no literature on visible minority female principalship available in Canada. In order to serve as a reference for the people who will be interested in visible minority female principalship in the future, I would like to present the following additional findings in the following section. These include: (a) the participants' appreciation of being involved in the study, (b) definitions given by the participants, (c)

similarities with and differences from white principals, and (d) belonging to the main stream or being accepted by the mainstream.

Additional Findings

The Participants' Appreciation of Being Involved in the Study

I had a difficult time finding participants for this study. I recall locating one name from a website that I thought would be a visible minority principal. When I called her and asked her if she might be interested in this study, her answer was that my study was very interesting but she was not interested. I found this to be very discouraging. When I finally managed to involve these five participants, I always worried that they would elect to drop out of this study, or that they might not have time for me. In fact, all of them made time for me from their busy schedules after a very tiring school day. They tried their best to support me. As well, they all indicated they enjoyed this study. This is not what I expected to hear and, of course, I feel very happy and would like to share the thoughts of three of the participants here:

It's tough, it's very good. I'm glad to have answered these questions because it's allowed me to be reflective of my practice, which I haven't had the time to do . . . lately it's been so busy. So I appreciate this because it's allowed me to be reflective and to go back and think about how it has been for me these last three years. I think having our interview was really good because it made me really think about it. I don't think I have anything more to add, other than I appreciate this because it's made me think. You know, I don't spend time to do this kind of thinking so this is kind of good. These questions are good, the interview is good. (D. I. p. 30)

I have to thank you, too, Bing, for providing me with the opportunity to explore my belief and approaches as a leader. No one usually has time to do that, but because your questions forced us to think and reflect on your own personal journeys, it really affected my self-awareness as a principal. Thank you! (C. E-mail of May 12, 2009)

Well, I'm enjoying these questions because you know you don't usually talk about yourself, and having to answer these questions really makes you think about the whole process . . . How? Why? Where? Have I become successful?

You know . . . I like this . . . you often think about things at school how you've handled them from day one 'til now . . . x number of years later and how much you've grown., but it's nice to have all this other background information that's in your head, but you don't think about every day. It brings it to the surface and it just reinforces in my head when I'm telling you . . . you know how I operate and what kind of leader am I. It just reinforces in my mind that I'm on the right track and then I'm doing the right things . . . it's a continuum and even though you think you're doing a good job, you can always improve. This is kind of making me think what more can I do? (B. I. p. 31)

Apparently, all the participants enjoyed getting involved in this study. Answering the three interview questions helped them to reflect on their administrative work life experiences. Reflecting on their administrative practice in the school made them seek effective ways to build inclusive schools.

Definitions Given by the Participants

There are two definitions that the five participants have their own thoughts about which I found interesting: the definition of visible minority and the visible minority female principal.

Visible Minority

The concept of visible minority applies to persons who are identified according to the Employment Equity Act of Canada as being non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color. All the participants understood that visible minority is connected with skin color. However, three of them added different feelings, definitions, and understandings about visible minority. Ann felt that she is a visible minority both in Canada and in her home country and she doesn't fit in either. Carol felt puzzled by the meaning of visible minority simply meaning the person whose skin color is not white. Darlene has her own definitions of visible minority according to the majority population and strong speech accent. They explained their ideas as the following:

... anybody looking at me would know that I'm not from here originally. I may have been here for a long time, but this is not my home. And it's interesting because when I go to my home country I don't look *as though I* belong to them either ... sometimes when you're a minority, a visible minority, even when you go home, you don't feel like you really fit in there either. But certainly here I think visible minority means that you're identifiable as a minority by just looking at you. (A. I. p. 2)

Visible minority means that when you look at the person, you can tell they're not white. That's what it means. Well, it makes you feel like you're different, you're singled out, you're minor, not major. You're in a minority. You're not in a majority even if you're in a school that has 90 percent of the population that is Asian or South Asian, they're still considered a visible minority. You don't look at the white people and say they're the visible minority. It's a very divisive type of term to identify ethnicities that are not white. And yet you can look at white people and they might be from Germany or from Italy and not speak a word of English and they have many of the same concerns and limitations that people from a visible minority would have but I can guarantee that if you walked into a store there would be certain assumptions made about them due to their colour that would not be made about people that are a visible minority – not white. (C. I. p. 2)

For me a visible minority would be someone who obviously not of the same culture, or culture or even skin, I think skin is a lot to do with visible, being visible minority means depends where you are. So in Canada, North America, which is where the term is used the most, visible minority we would say those who aren't your basic Caucasian I think because Canada, the North America is predominately Caucasian. However that's a funny term because if you are in somewhere of this city the visible minority would be actually the Caucasians because most of the students in your classrooms are of Asian persuasion or of a different skin color ... I think a visible minority person might be somebody that has a very strong accent with their English speaking ... If I came in with my Asian accent ... then they would really recognize that I was a visible minority. That would make me visible I think because that not just the skin color but if I also talk that way. But because I don't have that accent I don't think the children or the people here view me, really notice that I am a minority. (D. I. pp. 3-4)

The participants' experiences and observations indicated to them that the term visible minority has its roots in the national Canadian context whereby people of colour are undoubtedly numerically smaller when compared with the Caucasian majority. However, this concept is unrealistic in the participants' contexts where the children of the majority culture are children of colour, not Caucasian.

Visible Minority Female Principal

When I asked what visible minority female principal meant to them, three of the five participants answered that they didn't regard themselves as a visible minority female principal because they never think about it in that way. Their responses are as follows:

It is a funny type of thing because I don't walk around thinking of myself as a female visible minority principal. But it's a funny buttonhole and I'm happy to help if I can. It would be really interesting to see if doing this research has any profound effect on peoples' understanding of what it is to be a female visible minority in any leadership position. (C. I. p. 9)

Well, to me again it means somebody who is not part of the majority there who is from a different race or a different culture and to look at them you can see that they did not originate in that country or at least their background is not from that country . . . I think the fact that my skin is brown has made it easier for me with first nations' kids or with Indian kids or with Pakistani kids coming in probably. And I've noticed with the newly immigrant families from Bengal and some Pakistan they want to come and talk to me because they think, you know, they feel the closer attachment you know and that's nice. So perhaps in that way being a principal of a visible minority has been an asset to me . . . (B. I. pp. 7-8)

The way it is used here would be somebody who's not white, female and a principal. So here I think that's the way most North America views it, but I'm not so sure I qualify only because, you know I like to say I'm a banana, I'm yellow on the outside, but white on the inside. I think I'm very western in my thinking and western in my speech even. But the visibility would be in my look and maybe because I also have because I have, I'm first generation, I still have the culture inside of me. So do I qualify as a visible minority, yes I think I would qualify because of my looks. (D. I. p. 11)

I must say it really doesn't have any particularly strong meaning for me. Partly because I don't think of myself that way. I don't really compare myself or position myself as a minority female. I only feel that I am a human being, first and foremost, so for me, I compete with people in the mainstream. So I don't really compare myself with people who are not in the mainstream of society . . . so the idea of being a visible minority principal has no strong feeling for me. (E. I. p. 8)

I never thought I was a visible minority female principal. I was a female principal . . . So I thought of myself more in terms of breaking through as a female not as a visible minority. That part didn't even concern me. (A. I. pp. 7-8)

Most of the participants did not regard themselves as a visible minority female principal because their upbringing and life experiences focused on functioning in the mainstream culture. The participants all enjoyed professional success as principals which brought them status and acceptance from their communities and those with whom they worked. They regarded themselves as women, people, principals first; being competent, knowledgeable, and professional were the most important attributes. Their multicultural communities and contexts diminished attention to skin color.

Similarities with and Differences from White Principals

Most of the participants didn't regard themselves as visible minority female principals, but when I asked if they thought they felt they were the same as, or different from, white female school principals, except for color, their answers were that they were different from the white female principals because their experiences were different, and their understanding of their students, especially different ethnic students, was different.

Their answers are as the following:

I think you're always different when you're in the minority group as opposed to a majority group . . . Because my background is different and everything I bring to the job is different . . . I'm not sure how you explain how you are different, except I think you have more of an understanding of different kinds of people because you've had to deal from a different stand point than most of the people in the society. When you're the majority group and you've dealt mostly with the majority group your experiences may be not as varied. You have more of an understanding of the different students you may have in the school. If they have different immigrant groups represented in the school then I think you have more of an understanding of that, especially if you've been an immigrant yourself or your family has immigrated in their lifetime. I guess I always feel a little bit different. My minority status is always a part of me and I'm always conscious of it. So it is a part of me. It makes me who I am. (A. I. p. 44)

Well I think I am definitely different. It's not just color, but it's because I've experienced a variety of cultures . . . And I think that made me more sensitive to other cultures needs and made me want to participate in and be part of something that was more inclusive. (B. I. p. 33)

I think that your background and experience could help to define who you are, so for me, having lived in different countries, and being exposed to different cultures, I would say, not that it really has a lot to do with color, it does lead to a deeper understanding of what your students and family or even teachers may be experiencing based on their background and culture. So in some ways I suppose I feel more global than somebody who was just raised in one place, grew up here and is teaching and working in the same region. (C. I. pp. 41-42)

Well, I kind of say it's personality, and not culture, but it could be culture . . . and our differences. I find that our Caucasian school principals, some of them are much more assertive, they're bolder. Maybe sometimes are more aggressive. They try to be more like a guy, like a man . . . whereas being of my ethnic background, we are more servants. I shouldn't say servants. I should say our leadership, my leadership style, is more of a servant . . . where we try to help as opposed to tell, and I've had more exposure to different cultures. I am different, my experiences are different. But so far as ability, I don't think I am any less able than they are. (D. I. pp. 37-38)

I think if you don't stop seeing yourself as different from other people . . . If you come from a stand as which you see yourself as always different . . . then I think it can become an obstacle. At the same time one should celebrate the fact that you are different. One should celebrate the fact that you have a different heritage. You bring richness to the center of the community or the society, and so I don't think that one should see color, your obvious physical characteristics, as obstacles to doing your job. They should not be an obstacle to how you interact with students or other people. You are a human being who just happened to be born with a different color or different physical characteristics but that doesn't make you less of a person. So I don't perceive myself different in the sense that while obviously, physically I look different, I speak with an accent; nevertheless, I feel that I am just as competent as other people. I go through the same kind of learning curve as others. The differences come from each of us just being a unique human being . . . (E. I. pp. 32-33)

The five principals in this study admitted that they were different from Caucasian female principals because they had experiences living in both a multicultural environment and their homeland immigrant experiences which brought richness to the school and community. Their minority status and personal experience provide a better understanding of their diverse student populations and their families. Their minority status made them more inclusive.

Belonging to the Mainstream or Being Accepted by the Mainstream

At their third interview, I asked them if they regarded themselves as a member of the mainstream or as being accepted by the mainstream. The participants did not see themselves as a visible minority but as part of the mainstream. They gave the following comments:

I don't think of myself as the mainstream, as the majority, but I think I am certainly accepted as part of it. But certainly I am accepted professionally as a principal. I don't feel like now my minority status comes into it. Maybe it did at one time while I was still building my reputation and so on. But I don't see myself as being mainstream. But I'm married to somebody who is part of the majority culture. And my kids were born here. I feel probably more of the mainstream than other minority people who perhaps are more a part of that minority group in terms of marrying within and maybe more closely associated with their minority group. But I think people have accepted me as part of the principal group regardless of whether they think I am minority or not. I don't think anyone looking at me would think of me as mainstream just from the fact that I am a visible minority. I'd like to think that they just see me as a principal. (A. I. p. 45)

I think for the most part they've accepted me for the mainstream . . . I mean I was a teacher for 20 years before I became an administrator so having been raised in England, I didn't have an accent, an Asian accent. So it maybe had made that transition a little easier . . . I used to feel that way that you know you have to be better than others to get a certain position because you don't fit that mainstream. But I don't want to fit that mainstream anymore. Why? Because I'm proud of the way I've turned out, I'm proud of the things I've gone through to get here. I think people respect me because I'm not just one of the mainstream. You know, so it takes some time . . . It takes a long time before you get to that point. (B. I. p. 25, p. 34)

. . . I think my experiences with many different cultures and having grown up in a different ethnic circle was an asset. But I do believe that I've always viewed myself as being part of that mainstream in culture. I do think I belong in the mainstream culture. I think many have accepted me in mainstream culture. I don't think everybody has, but I think many have accepted me because I think many people don't think I am yet, because I don't look . . . Yeah, we're fortunate here in Western Canada. I think it's because a lot of people are accepting Asians as part of mainstream culture. (D. I. pp. 39-40)

I cannot control how other people will act towards me. But I can control how I react to them. I'm only responsible for my own behaviour. So in other words, I try to model what I would like to see in a society in which people's differences

are accepted, where people's different cultural backgrounds are seen as an element to bring about richness in the community, and the cultural experience is seen as an asset in looking at solving global issues . . . I cannot have any say about how people look at me or how they treat me. I can only have the ability to control how I behave. And then at the same time I have a choice . . . in terms of how I react to people's perceptions. I can interpret it negatively, or I can interpret it positively. So ultimately the solutions lie in me and not someone else. (E. I. p. 34)

. . . I grew up so I in myself have become more able to have a foot in both cultures because I think Asian culture has grown so much here. But ironically the Asian culture that has flourished here is not one that I am part of . . . If I were to wear my home country's clothes, and to have an accent, it would be more difficult for people to accept me as mainstream. I don't think it would be more difficult for people to accept me, but they certainly wouldn't think I was one of them. I think more people are able to accept me because my background culture, growing up in this society, very much reflects theirs . . . (C. I. pp. 38-39)

All the participants believed they were accepted by the mainstream culture. They felt privileged because despite their Asian heritage, they were able to attain academic and professional achievements and success.

In conclusion, in order to fill the void in the literature on visible minority female principals in Canada, I feel that I have an obligation to provide additional findings to the people who are interested in visible minority female leadership in Canada and are eager to find more material on this area. From the additional findings of definitions of visible minority, and the understandings of the visible minority female principals, similarities with and differences from the white female principals, belonging to the main stream or being accepted, as well as the wonderful thoughts, it is evident that these five participants showed their wisdom, their enthusiasm, and their philosophy of education based on their life-long positive and negative experiences. Their work life was formed and influenced by their background and experiences. No matter whether or not they regarded themselves as visible minority female principals, they are successful principals.

They have contributed so much to education in Western Canada, and their career path, challenges, and strategies need to be remembered.

Summary of Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presented an analysis and discussion of the data according to the order of the research questions. The data were collected from five visible minority female principals who work in public school systems in Western Canada. The respondents' general comments and actual quotations from the interviews and their school documents were used in the analysis and presentation of the data.

The participants' responses revealed that the path for visible minority females to becoming a principal revealed more similarities than differences. All the participants experienced family, social, and organizational influences on their road to pursuing a principal position. All five participants agreed that they had unique personal abilities and strengths which helped them to compete for a principal position. However, their path of achieving a principal position was not smooth but rather was filled with personal, professional, and organizational challenges. The participants also received many supports which, together with the preparatory and training programs in which they took part, helped them to become well prepared for a principal position. While the five visible minority females experienced similar processes in becoming a principal, their journeys differed in the length of time they had to wait before being promoted first to a vice-principalship and then to a principalship.

The data indicated that there are five kinds of challenges the participants in this study faced in their role as a school principal. The personal challenges these participants faced were similar in terms of time management but differed due to their unique personal situations such as health or a sick child. Besides personal challenges, the five

participants had to deal with professional challenges such as loneliness, difficult staff, different kinds of students, high demanding parents, and instructional leadership.

However, the five participants regarded the professional challenges as opportunities to learn and improve their abilities in their administration work, and helped to strengthen their beliefs about education.

Two participants shared organizational challenges related to staff members who were supported by their teachers' unions. The challenge around race and gender came from students' parents or male staff members. However, two participants learned to turn the negative impact of race and gender into a positive view. Accent was also regarded as a challenge by four participants who claimed no accent when they spoke English but the one participant who spoke English with an accent did not regard it as a challenge. This participant believed the important thing is to have clear communication and be understood by others.

Data collected from the interviews and documents identified four themes related to creating an inclusive school learning environment. Their attributes and abilities provide the first foundation for their leadership roles. Their support systems strengthened their abilities to do their administrative jobs. Their minority status added extra support to their principal position, and the six strategies they used in their daily principal work assisted them in creating an inclusive school community. As well, the additional findings helped to understand who they believed they were and the administrative work life they had experienced so far.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter will compare and discuss the results and findings of the administrative work life of the selected visible minority female principals as described in Chapter Five with Chapter Two. The summary of findings, recommendations, and implications for theory, practice, and future research are also included.

Discussion of Findings

In order to answer the research questions, five visible minority female principals were asked to participate in in-depth interviews. I also collected school documents from their school websites and from the participants. As well, my reflective journal also contributed to the process of data collection. The data analyzed in the previous chapters summarized each participant's case story, and the responses to and findings of the three research questions. This section of the chapter compares the literature with the findings.

The Path for Visible Minority Females to Becoming a School Principal

The first research question was concerned with the path for visible minority female to becoming principals. The question sought information from five visible minority female principals with respect to the influences, personal abilities and strengths, challenges, supports, preparatory and training programs, and the process to achieve the principal position.

Influences

The visible minority female principals indicated that the influences which come from the three factors – family, society, and the school system organization – had a large impact on their path to the principalship.

Family influences. All five participants came from a highly educated Asian family background. In Asian culture, parents have high demands and expectations of their children, their education, and future. A higher value is placed on careers in medicine, law, or engineering than in teaching. However, positions of school vice principal and principal are more highly regarded than teaching. This coincides with the findings in Pacis' (2005) study that Asian families value education but not the education profession. Careers such as medicine or law, which receive a high salary, were their first choices. In this study, the expectation the participants received from their parents was to do what they wanted as long as they felt happy rather than guiding them to be a medical doctor or a lawyer. The participants learned from their parents about the high value of education. Parental influences laid a solid foundation for their personal characteristics and their future road to education and leadership. In addition to the parents' influence, other family members such as husbands, siblings, and fathers-in-law also contributed to encouraging the participants' toward their path to educational administration. Family influence, as Gaskins (2006) found, guided them to set their goals and make sacrifices to achieve them. All the participants indicated that their families did not focus on or stress their visible minority status.

Social influences. Society had a big impact on the five participants on their path to educational administration. Betty was deeply influenced by the biased community in which she lived in England and the racism and bullying experiences in her school life

there in a negative sense compared with the welcoming communities in Canada in a positive sense. These experiences helped her decide to pursue the goal of being a school administrator so that she could (a) support students from different cultural backgrounds to feel that they belong, and (b) to eliminate bullying in her school.

Darlene's trip to America with her brother and the discrimination they experienced in a restaurant paralleled Eva's experiences. In comparing America with Canada, Eva concluded that the multicultural Canadian society is more open and fair in terms of hiring qualified females and visible minorities and promoting them to leadership positions.

Social influences for Carol and Ann were always positive. Ann also decided at an early age that she would view society in a positive way and so she just focused on working to compete and pursue what she wanted by becoming prepared and qualified. For all five participants, both positive and negative social influences played important roles in influencing them on their way toward educational administration. The researcher found no reference in the literature about social influence on visible minority females when they applied for a principalship.

Organizational influences. In addition to the family and social influences, the five participants in this study all had more positive than negative organizational influences. Organizational positive influences can be summarized as the school system being fair, equal, and caring by identifying individuals' skills, knowledge, and ability rather than a person's color when they selected principals. However, some participants indicated that they had learned to see things in a positive way after negative things happened to them. When they failed to be selected for a school administration position,

the participants did not relate it to their visible minority status or the fact that they were female.

For some of the participants such as Ann and Betty, the idea of ignoring visible minority status or color matched Trujillo-Ball's (2003) conclusion that visible minority females learned to keep quiet, or refused, or neglected, or changed their identities in order to be accepted by others. Although three of the participants didn't mention ignoring their visible minority status in their organizational influences, they talked more about being in the mainstream than visible minority.

The negative organizational influence for one participant was related to a dean in the university who did the entrance teacher interview for her and showed racial discrimination to her by speaking English very slowly to her and telling her that teaching was not a good profession for her. Another participant's organizational influence was connected with a teacher strike in her school system when she was a vice principal. She was put in a dilemma between the central office and the teachers on the picket line. Although she did not want to be in opposition to her school system, she chose to support her teachers. This dilemma fits in well with Blackmore's (2002) statement that minority female leaders often face a double jeopardy in their leadership roles. They are considered to be failures or a source of trouble to the organization if they do not conform to the organizational rules on the one hand, and disloyal to their communities if they adhere to the organizational expectations on the other hand.

Two participants wondered if they were being selected to be principals by their school system because of their colour, or on the basis of their qualifications. One participant believed that sometimes school systems wanted to fill their quota related to visible minority people and gender. Similar questions were raised in Gaskins' (2006),

Pacis' (2005), and Scinto's (2006) findings that visible minority females were often appointed to principalships because it was thought to look good, and created the impression that the school board was practicing gender equity and filling minority quotas. Even if that was true, the participants in this study believed that ultimately a person still had to prove herself in that position.

The influences from the family, society, and school system, both positive and negative, intertwined to shape these five visible minority female principals' identities and beliefs, and strengthened and contributed to their future philosophy of education and leadership and their determination to pursue the path of educational administration.

Personal Abilities and Strengths

The road to the principalship required some necessary personal abilities and strengths. A passion for learning, making a difference for their students' learning, and the capability to address the learning needs of a diverse group of students were the strengths and abilities of Asian female principals found in Pacis' (2005) research and African female principals as reported in Mertz and McNeely's (1998) work. These findings were also found to be intertwined in this study. The fact that all five participants in this study had a Master's degree indicated a passion for learning new things such as computer techniques, and had a good reputation for teaching in their schools. They used their abilities and strengths to make a difference for their school and for students' learning. This was demonstrated by their leadership either in their schools or outside their schools, having solid curricula knowledge, doing action research, writing documents for the government, and organizing workshops and seminars.

The literature and the results of this research showed that the abilities and strengths the five participants possessed and showed in their schools and school systems

indicated that these principals prepared themselves well for leading. As long as opportunities came, these core qualities would assist them in administrative positions.

Challenges

Every minority female principal has a difficult road to travel to her educational leadership position (Pacis, 2005). The respondents in this study conquered personal, professional, and organizational challenges along their road to the principalship. The personal challenges could be summarized as lack of self confidence, a lack of wide life experiences in handling complicated situations, problems of dealing with time and paper, finding time to look after family members, finding time to do network and build relationships with others, health problems, not being an athlete or a coach in a school, having no time for fun, not knowing how to play the politics game, lacking money to do continual learning, and experiencing a difficult marriage.

In addition to personal challenges, the five individuals also had to deal with professional and organizational challenges. Professional challenges included learning new curricula, becoming familiar with the school's sports culture, learning the different cultures of the school, not being confrontational and aggressive, long work hours, and conflict between work and home. Organizational challenges were not knowing the school system or union process, expectations and politics, and wondering if promotions are related to race and gender.

In comparing the results of this study with the literature, some of the challenges were found to be common to all female principals, not only visible minority principals. These included challenges such as time-related issues, long work hours, and conflict between home and career, and marital relationship (Hopkins, 2003; Young & McLeod, 2001), gender challenges (Mogadime, 2008; Trujillo-Ball, 2003), tokenism (Gaskins,

2006; Scinto, 2006), lack of confidence (Gardiner et al., 1999), and not being confrontational and aggressive (Pacis, 2005).

However, some differences also appeared when comparing the findings in this study with the literature. Contrary to the findings about pressure for Asian females (Pacis, 2005), the five participants in this study did not receive any pressure from their families when they aspired to the principalship. Second, none of the participants regarded the lack of visible minority role models and mentors as challenges for them as was reported by Bancroft et al. (1988), Carr (1997), and Pacis (2005). The respondents in this study thought it was not necessary to have role models or mentors who must be visible minority females. Third, the district assumption of Asian females being quiet and weak and not qualified for the principalship mentioned by Pacis (2005) was not shown in this study.

Finally, but interestingly, none of the participants indicated that race and colour negatively affected their application for a principal position although it was suggested by others that this might be a factor. The researcher thought that two reasons might explain result: (a) the location and area where these participants lived, visible minority group are the numerical majority; and (b) these five participants are privileged because of economic status and academic achievement. This finding did not match the findings of Bush et al. (2006) and Gardiner et al. (1999) who reported that race blocked the way for visible minority females to pursue leadership positions.

Additional findings about challenges to the path of the principalship which contribute to the literature on visible minority female leadership are not being an athlete or a coach in a school, lack of money for continual learning, learning new curricula,

learning about all the different cultures of the school, and not knowing the school district or union processes, expectations, and politics.

In brief, the challenges reported above show that the participants had experienced different kinds of challenges on their journey to pursue a principal position. Some challenges were common to all female leaders, while other challenges were unique only to the visible minority female principals in my study. The unique challenges which were summarized can provide useful information for future research on the path for the visible minority female to a principalship. Obviously, the challenges and difficulties have provided the visible minority females in this study with opportunities to strengthen their will, learn to view things in different ways, and prepared them to have the ability to deal with challenges in their future principal positions.

Supports

In addition to the challenges, the respondents in this study also received many supports on their journey to leadership positions. The supports they received were found in their family, role models, and mentors. The family supports for the respondents mainly came from their family members such as husbands who encouraged them to pursue a principal's position, to do what they wanted to do, and to believe in their leadership potential. Parents helped one of the participants by paying her tuition fees and providing emotional support. Parents took care of another principal's children. Children showed their support by attending activities at their mothers' school. Another important support for the five participants was the encouragement from the husband, principal, assistant superintendent, or superintendent to think about pursuing a principal position. In addition, role models and mentors were also regarded as very important supports.

The findings in this study support the findings of Gardiner et al. (1999), Young and McLeod (2001), Conrad and Conrad (2007), and Pacis (2005) as to the support given by family members, other educational leaders and mentors. However, the difference between the literature and this study on mentor support is that the people who acted as mentors in the literature might be visible minorities but in this study, none of the participants had visible minority females as their mentors except for one who had a First Nation female as a mentor. None of the participants in this study identified support from community church members as Gaskin's (2006) study found. The supports from this study on visible minority female leadership – children, encouragement from husbands, principals, assistant superintendents, and superintendents, and role models – are commonly found in studies of women principals.

In addition, the following thoughts from the participants that it is not absolutely necessary to have minority role models and mentors can also be regarded as a contribution from this study. First, it will take a long time to find visible minority female role models or mentors because of their scarcity in the principalship. Furthermore, having visible minority female role models and mentors is not essential but could be an advantage in helping to solve administrative problems, and to talk about sensitive issues that mainstream principals might not understand. The support which the five participants received from family, and role models and mentors provided them with confidence, helped them to identify their leadership potential, and pushed and guided them on the road to educational administration.

Preparatory and Training Programs

This study confirmed the importance of preparatory or training programs as reported in the literature. The five participants indicated their preparatory and training

programs for the principalship included serving as teacher leaders when they were teachers. They all have Bachelor of Education and Master's degrees in Educational Administration or fields related to Education. As vice principals, they all attended educational leadership training programs such as short courses or workshops in their school systems. Some also attended educational leadership conferences as well as undertaking research.

The importance of preparatory programs found in this study confirms the findings of Holtkamp (2002) and Pacis (2005) who indicated that professional training programs provided women the opportunity to learn and to evaluate their potential for a leadership position, compared them to females that are presently in leadership roles, and inspired them to seek positions in educational administration. The findings from this study differ from those in the literature in terms of the specific training activities that were deemed to be important, namely the teacher leader experiences the five participants had in their schools, the knowledge they gained from their Bachelor and Master's degrees, and the research they conducted on female principals. The preparatory and training programs that the five participants took part in before they became principals, together with the other supports, were important incentives to pursue principalships.

The Process to Achieve a Principal Position

The path towards the principalship for the five participants in this study can be summarized as follows. All were influenced by their family, society, and school system. Each had their own particular abilities and strengths which they used to reach their goal. They all met personal, professional, and organizational challenges on their journey towards the principalship. They all received support from their family members, colleagues' encouragements, role models and mentors, and preparatory and training

programs. The path to the principal position for the five participants in this study can be summarized as *Teacher – Teacher leader – Vice principal – Principal*. However, some differences for the five participants' journeys were in the length of their classroom service as teachers and the length of their service as vice principal. None of the five participants was assigned to a school with a lot of minority students. This finding differed from the findings of Trujillo-Ball (2003) that visible minority teachers were assigned to principalships according to their ethnicity.

The Challenges Visible Minority Female Principals Experienced in Their Role as School Principals

Data collected in this study showed that the five participants faced numerous challenges in their position as a principal. These included personal, professional, organizational, race and gender, and accent challenges. Some individuals faced all of these challenges while others faced only a few.

Personal Challenges

These visible minority female principals faced three common personal challenges: time management, balancing family obligations with professional commitments, and work. A review of the literature showed that visible minority female principals struggled with balancing traditional family and leadership roles, balancing home and career, a heavy workload, pressure from work, and having to sacrifice their family life to their principal roles (Hopkins, 2003; Pacis, 2005; Smulyan, 2000). In addition, Howard and Mallory (2008) mentioned that principals' busy work schedules and job stress affected their health. All participants of my study agreed that exercise was very important, but it was hard to find time to exercise. The personal challenges which I did not find in the literature, but which can be considered as a contribution from this

study, were never having been an athlete or a coach, no time for fun, not used to doing physical work, and the lack of rich life experiences.

Professional Challenges

Besides the personal challenges, the five visible minority female principals also faced a number of professional challenges in their role as a principal. These professional challenges can be classified into six categories: (a) loneliness, (b) teachers, (c) students, (d) parents, (e) instructional leadership, and (f) school.

Loneliness. Three of five participants indicated that the principal position is a lonely job for three reasons. First, principals were not always included in the staff conversation circle. Second, principals have to manage the degree of their relationships with the staff. Two participants indicated that the principal position could be lonely but making networks and connections, and building relationships helped them overcome √ loneliness.

The professional challenges for visible minority female principals reported in the literature which coincided with this study were isolation and loneliness. Bush et al. (2006), Holtkamp (2002), and Trujillo-Ball (2003) noted isolation and loneliness were challenges for visible minority female principals in their role as principal. Howard and Mallory (2008) believed that the careers of most school administrators are relatively lonely and that loneliness was experienced by every visible minority female principal in their study.

Teachers. Six challenges related to teachers were reported by the participants. These included (a) dealing with staff who are not team members and who are not willing to work as hard as others; (b) when there are new staff members, it is a long process for principals to supervise and to write out the appraisals for them; (c) finding a balance of

how much to push teachers who are nearing retirement, who don't care to improve their teaching styles, and continue to teach the same old way; (d) working with the staff assigned to the school and helping them to look beyond monetary motivation; (e) working hard to build trust with some people, especially men, who had difficulty sometimes accepting female principal authority, especially at the beginning; and (f) dealing with the staff who are the wives of other principals or superintendents who thought they should be given special considerations. There is no reference in the literature reviewed about work relationships with teachers as a professional challenge for visible minority female principals.

Students. Challenges with students were discussed by two of the participants. These were dealing with aggressive students and providing appropriate education for students from both stable and broken homes. Nothing in the literature could be found to match with the findings of the student challenges in this study.

Parents. Three participants identified challenges they had with parents. These included (a) dealing with parents who make excuses for their children and blame everybody else; (b) dealing with parents in high positions who thought they were entitled to run the school and who believed have the right to accuse, blame, and make demands on the school; (c) building trust with male parents who found it difficult to accept a woman of color as a principal; and (d) guiding parents to support their students and monitor their work.

Participants in Trujillo-Ball's (2003) study mentioned that visible minority females must work twice as hard and give up a lot compared with male principals to build trust when leading a school, especially trust from the students' parents. In addition, the participants in Pacis' (2005) study faced two professional challenges: the

stressful principal position and low salary. The stresses of the job consisted of assuming heavy responsibilities and time commitment to fulfill their role as a principal and to satisfy parents and community. However, none of the participants in this study mentioned that their salary was too low.

Instructional leadership. The challenges of instructional leadership experienced by the participants were their administrative responsibilities related to guiding, instructing, and leading. These include finding ways to support the staff to become better teachers, helping them to be risk-takers, to guide teachers and students in their learning, to find time to introduce the new curricula that the province is setting out for teachers, and to learn the new ways in order to make the administrative work more up-to-date. In comparing the findings with the literature, although instructional leadership was not used as a term to describe the visible minority female principals' daily administrative work in the studies of Trujillo-Ball (2003), Pacis (2005), and Smulyan (2000), they did mention that visible minority female principals worked very hard to lead their teachers, students, and school community toward their goals. Instructional leadership is these visible minority female principals practiced daily in the school, and the challenges they faced should be more or less the same.

School. Four school-related issues were professional challenges for the participants: (a) declining student enrolments, (b) building school programs such as a traditional school, and (c) fund raising to pay for the breakfast and lunch program, and (d) activities for students who live in economically disadvantaged communities. However, no specific literature reference regarding the school challenges found in this study was located.

Organizational Challenges

Only two participants reported that they faced organizational challenges. One challenge was that when the staff did not get along, the teachers' union often got involved in these matters. The other was a principal can't usually designate who the staff members of their school should be and sometimes a principal can't do anything because these matters are beyond her control and involve the teachers' union. No reference to teacher unions' involvement in teacher–principal relationships was reported in the literature. Although the findings of Howard and Mallory's (2008) study indicated that the officials and personnel in central office did not understand and support the visible minority female principals' job, it did not totally match the organizational challenges of this study.

Race and Gender

Russell and Wright (1991) and Gardiner et al. (1999) believed visible minority women may be doubly challenged by the combination of two barriers – gender and race – in their role as a principal. There are three different views about the challenges of race and gender in this study. One of the four participants didn't think race and gender were challenges for her. Two of the participants believed that race and gender were challenges for their principal position. The remaining two participants learned to change from a negative view to a positive view with respect to race and gender.

Ann and Darlene believed that there are people who can't work under women or have a difficult time accepting leadership from a different ethnic background. For both of them, the challenges especially came from the students' parents. Ann said that when people see you're a female principal or a visible minority principal, they would treat you a bit different. It takes longer for a visible minority female principal to be accepted by

the community and to build a reputation in the community than for a male principal.

This confirms the findings of Trujillo-Ball's (2003) study that it takes females and minorities a long time to prove themselves and to build trust. F. C. Collins (1998), Pacis (2005), and Scinto (2006) all indicated that female principals generally are questioned about their ability to lead and about keeping discipline and order. Both the community and school board often perceived female principals as incompetent or lacking all necessary skills required to lead a school (Trujillo-Ball; Pacis; Scinto).

Interestingly, Darlene experienced a female parent who was excusing herself because she was southern European, and she had every right to lose her temper and be angry with Darlene because she wasn't northern European or Asian. She excused herself by using her ethnic background so that she can throw a temper and be angry at Darlene. The racism that this parent exhibited made Darlene realize that she wouldn't let negative issues affect her; rather she had to be very confident. Darlene viewed herself as a principal first, not as a female or an Asian, which some people regarded as a negative. This matched what Trujillo-Ball (2003) stated:

Consequently, females and minorities have their identities changed by the dominant hegemonic culture; they disregard their own identity in order to adopt the acceptable identity. This acceptable identity is one that discounts most, if not all, personal attributes that do not conform to the norm. Accepting an externally applied identity to which one is not accustomed creates personal and career barriers for an individual. (p. 11)

Like Darlene, both Eva and Betty indicated that they did not want race and gender to be a negative impact for them. They tried to see things from a positive rather than a negative perspective. Eva emphasized that as a female and visible minority, she needed to have a belief system which the mainstream person could accept. She did not want to have any negative impact on her in order to survive in this society. Betty chose

to look at race and gender differently. She regarded her previous racism experiences as a learning process. She learned and grew from it, she became a stronger person, the person she is today. Both Eva's and Betty's thoughts parallel the research findings of Trujillo-Ball (2003) that females, especially visible minority females, who want to be accepted for their capabilities, do not want race and gender to affect them, and they would change or shape their identities to fit into an organization.

Accent and Related Discrimination

All the participants in this study were sensitive about accent. Four of them maintained they speak English without an accent but they believed that they would experience challenges if they spoke with an accent. Based on their experiences with others, they strongly believed that speaking English with an accent for a visible minority female principal could be a challenge for a principal, and they would be treated differently if they spoke English with an accent. The participants indicted that they would face four kinds of challenges if they spoke English with an accent. First, people would speak more loudly and more slowly, thinking the listeners might be not able to understand them. Second, people would make fun of the way you speak. Third, people would not have the patience or take the time to learn about the person and to try to understand them. Finally, it might take a little longer time for people to know you if they have to listen a little harder, or they might just dismiss you and say they don't want to listen to you because it's too hard. Darlene witnessed speaking English with an accent was related to two kinds of discriminations: *visual discrimination* and *oral discrimination* which were explained in the previous chapter. She also experienced that even people from the same country are discriminated because of their accent. However, only one participant in this study admitted speaking English with an accent. Interestingly

enough, she did not have any negative experiences to share with the researcher because she didn't regard accent as a challenge for her. She said that many people in Canada speak English with a variety of accents. The critical thing for her is the ability to communicate clearly, and to have the competency to run a school and raise the achievement level of the students.

Balakrishnan and Hou (2004) and Pacis (2005) indicated that language proficiency was seen to be the most critical factor contributing to a positive or a negative integration experience for visible minority people, and sometimes it is more important than gender and race. Language proficiency might a problem for a new immigrant but not for the five principals in this study who all have been in Canada for 30 years or more.

The participants talked about the issue of speech accent on numerous occasions during the interviews. However, no research was found about accent as a challenge that the visible minority female principals faced. Accent is one of the important contributions to the literature on visible minority female leadership from this study. Because the participants referred to accent on numerous occasions, in order to understand the examples and thoughts on accent which the participants provided in the interviews, I searched the literature to find research on accent to help me understand accent and its influence.

Lippi-Green (1997) stated that, "It is crucial to remember that it is not all foreign accents, but only accent linked to skin that isn't white, or which signals a third-world homeland, that evokes such negative reactions" (pp. 238-239). However, in their study of African immigrant women and their accent, Creese and Kambere (2003) indicated that skin color might not be as important as English language accent. They explained

that when immigrants came to Canada from a nation or a land that was originally colonized by the British, they found, “A *foreign* accent is socially defined, such that British or Australian English accents, for example, do not seem to elicit the same treatment as described by the African immigrant women in our focus groups” (p. 566). The literature matches participant Darlene’s accent-related *visual discrimination* and *oral discrimination*.

Further to Darlene’s visual discrimination, Goldstein (2003) reported on a study done by Lippi-Green on the attitudes of 62 native English speaking university undergraduate students toward their foreign-born instructors. While each student listened to a four-minute prerecorded lecture, they saw two pictures of two women who were giving a lecture wearing the same style of clothing and having the same hair style but they were of different ethnicities. One was Caucasian and the other was Asian. Although the lecture was actually presented by a Native American woman, the majority of the responders stated that the presenter was Asian based on the perceived accent.

The participants in this study felt that clarity of communication is the key for accent. This parallels the finding of the study done by Lippi-Green (1997) that most common arguments for discrimination against non-main stream accents and language have to do with communication. According to the five participants’ experiences, one challenge that people who speak English with an accent face is that most people don’t have the patience to take the time to listen to these people during a conversation because they are hard to understand. Creese and Kambere’s (2003) study noted that when people listened to African English being spoken, more time was spent during the conversations in correcting the speakers’ accent rather than responding to what they were saying. Goldstein (2003) concluded that, “breakdown in communication and lack of

understanding is due not so much to an accent itself as it is to people's negative social evaluation of the accent and a rejection of the communicative burden" (p. 113) .

As indicated in the previous section, Eva is the only participant who admitted speaking English with an accent. However, her accent is British rather than Asian. Eva didn't bring this point up but I am concluding that this might contribute to her belief that accent is not a problem for her, and that the critical thing for a principal is clarity of the communication and competency in running a school.

Darlene had her own way of understanding accent and discrimination. It might be influenced by her mother who experienced accent discrimination in her homeland before she came to Canada. That was the reason Darlene's mother taught her children to speak English without a foreign accent at a very young age.

What Strategies Do Visible Minority Female Principals Use to Make Their Schools More Inclusive?

The strategies visible minority female principals used to make their schools more inclusive were summarized into four aspects: attributes and abilities necessary for the administration job, support system, the contribution of minority status, and ways to build an inclusive school.

Attributes and Abilities Necessary for the Administrative Job

All five participants indicated their attributes and abilities served as the foundation for their leadership position and helped them to develop their own style of building an inclusive school. Six attributes and abilities were identified by participants. First, they had a very clear vision, a big picture of where they were and where they wanted to go, and what the steps were that they needed to take. Second, they created a positive learning environment for students, teachers, and staff. The participants also had

the knowledge, capability, and experience to develop curricula, empower students' learning, motivate teachers and staff members to work hard at the school, and develop their own strengths. Third, all the participants claimed to have strong decision-making and problem-solving skills. They were able to diagnose a situation to prevent its negative impact, and they could make hard decisions when they needed to. They have confidence in themselves that they are doing the right thing based on their experiences and convictions. Fourth, the five participants had a deep love and care for their students. They said they found it easy to listen to students, be at their level, to understand and care about them, to have fun, listen, and connect with them. Fifth, good mediator skills were regarded by the five participants as an important skill for a principal. They indicated that they often acted as mediators for both parents and teachers when misunderstandings or different opinions arose. These five principals tried very hard to have both parties come to some agreement though they admitted their efforts didn't always succeed. Finally, the participants also possessed other qualities such as having a strong personalities, enthusiasm for the job, being joyful, having fun on the job, and the ability to multi-task. The participants also indicated they are a good listener and empathize with the others.

In looking at the literature, many of the attributes and skills that Pacis (2005) found for Asian-American female principals in her study are similar to those found in this study. These include creativity, thoughtfulness, intuitiveness, multi-task skills, being able to perceive the needs of the community, being a good listener, hard working, organized, and understanding others. Similar skills were also reported in Mertz and McNeely's (1998) study. Davenport's (2007) study portrayed her African-American female principal as inclusive, connected, collaborative, caring, respectful, a team worker, and a change agent.

Support Systems

Central office personnel. To successfully build an inclusive school, the five participants received support primarily from their school system personnel such as superintendents, assistant superintendents, and other office members. They offered the five individuals advice on solving problems and suggested good resources to the participants. The school system support confirms the findings of Howard and Mallory's (2008) study. As well, Young and Mcleod's (2001) study indicated the school board provided a great support to the visible minority female principals.

Mentors. A second level of support came from mentors. The central office provided mentors for each of the visible minority female principals in this study when they took on the principal roles. These mentors played important roles in guiding these participants in their initial years as a principal. The findings in this study confirm Pacis' (2005) study which found that mentors played a very important role in the success of Asian female school leaders. Scinto (2006) found that mentors are important for female principals, especially new female principals. The participants in Turner's (2004) study indicated that matching gender and race would be a wonderful mentoring mainly because women tend to have a different leadership style from men. However, there was no reference in the literature to school system finding and matching mentors for visible minority female principals when they were appointed into a principal position. This shows that school systems in Western Canada where the five participants work are very supportive in this regard.

Principals' association. The third level of support the participants received was from their district principal association. The principal association offered a variety of professional and leadership training programs and study groups so that the five

participants had opportunities to discuss and learn from others. Pacis (2005) reported that the participants in her study also valued these professional and training programs because these enabled them first to grow in leadership skills, and second to benefit their teachers, staff members, and students. In addition, the principals in the association coached each other, shared information and experiences in managing a school, built open, caring, and mutually beneficial relationships, and relieved the stress from the job. The connections and networking from the principals' association were regarded as important for the visible minority female principals, especially those with limited or no experience, or newer principals, and had a particularly powerful impact on their leadership roles. This matches the findings discussed by Conrad and Conrad (2007), Gardiner et al. (1999), Holtkamp (2002), and Young and McLeod (2001) in their studies of the importance of networking. These studies found that networking was an important type of professional support for visible minority female principals.

School staff members. The fourth level of support the five participants received came from their school community. Each praised their staff's contribution to the school. These participants worked as a team with their staffs. As principals, they received support in their personal and professional lives from their staffs. The support from the staff members matched the findings in studies done by Bloom and Erlandson (2003), Pacis (2005), and Turner (2004) who all noted visible minority female principals' dependence on support from the staff members and the school community.

Parent community. The parent community was another source of support. The participants agreed that for most part, their parent communities were very supportive in fund raising, school activities, and volunteer work. This is in agreement with the

literature (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Pacis, 2005; Turner, 2004) where researchers emphasized the importance of parent community support.

Family. The last type of support found in this study, and potentially the most important support, came from the participants' family members, such as husband, children, and parents. The participants indicated that their husbands provided them with advice, opinions, encouragements, and understanding. They shared household duties and understood that their wives needed to work late or long hours. Their parents' supports were spiritual or financial support, or taking care of their children. Their children's supports were in understanding their mothers' job and helping them with school activities. All the forms of family support found in this study parallel the findings in the studies conducted by Conrad and Conrad (2007) and Gaskins (2006) who noted that family support was given by participants' husband or partner, parents, children, relatives. This study matches the results of the work done by Hopkins (2003), Howard and Mallory (2008), and Young and McLeod (2001) who found that family support is very important for a female principal's success.

Many researchers reported on female principals using spiritual support. Gardiner et al. (1999), Hopkins (2003), Holtkamp (2002), and Turner (2004) talked about the strength some visible minority female principals derived from their spiritual beliefs and practices. In her dissertation, Reed-Yeboa (2007) found that her African-American female principal participants regarded their principal work as doing God's work, and their spirituality kept them focused on all the children in their schools in the spirit of social justice. No participants in this study talked about spiritual support. One participant in this study did mention she was influenced by a church organization but she did not provide any further information.

The Contribution of Minority Status

The heritage of all the five participants in this study is Asian. Although they seldom referred to themselves as members of a visible minority group, they all admitted that their status as visible minority assisted them with building an inclusive school environment. The participants identified five benefits that resulted from their minority status: (a) seeing things from a different perspective; (b) understanding students and their cultures; (c) a tendency to be more inclusive; (d) providing encouragement as a role model; and (e) new thoughts and hope.

Seeing things from a different perspective. All the participants indicated that their minority status is a kind form of strength, bringing a richness and difference to society, especially the school community, different ways of learning, and different perspectives of viewing things and the world. Their minority status was also regarded by these visible minority female principals as an asset in their work and personal life, and helped them become what they are and who they are today. This matches Harding's (1991) finding where she found that because Mexican-American principals saw things from different perspectives as the result of having a double cultural status, they thought of things from multi-angles. Mendez-Morse (2003) in her study of Mexican-American female principals found that because these principals lived and worked within two cultures, they learned to use a flexible way to think about and deal with things. The research findings from Pacis' (2005) study showed that the experiences for participants who grew up in a minority culture influenced "how they responded to situations and people. Their ability to scrutinize the world through multiple lenses provided them the foundation to better understand and honor diverse cultures" (p. 30).

Understanding the students and their cultures. The second aspect of visible minority status contribution was that it helped the five participants to understand the students and their cultures. As school principals, all participants confirmed that their minority status led them to understand their students, especially minority students, immigrants, refugees and cultures better. In addition, the participants extended their understanding and help to the students' parents and became a bridge to connect teachers and parents, and parents with other community members. This understanding parallels the research findings of Mertz and McNeely (1998) and Turner (2004) who identified that visible minority leaders having a unique understanding of the students and their community, and they were more empathetic towards minority group students and used this knowledge to help their students succeed. Pacis (2005) found that because visible minority female principals living background is a minority culture this enabled them to be more accepting of diverse cultures.

A tendency to be more inclusive. The third aspect of visible minority status contribution was to tend to be more inclusive. All the participants indicated that their background and experiences of living in various countries gave them a broader understanding of the richness of cultures and the importance of diversity, and led them to be more inclusive in their school community. The contribution of the minority status to an inclusive approach was noted in the research findings of Bush et al. (2006), Carr (1997), Trujillo-Ball (2003), and Turner (2004). These authors stated that visible minority principals served visible minority children and staff members effectively and inclusively because these leaders could understand the religious and cultural backgrounds of their students and their families.

Providing encouragement as a role model. The last aspect of visible minority contribution was providing encouragement as a role model. As a visible minority female principal, the five participants mentioned that their different physical appearances comforted many visible minority students who were newly arrived Canada. As indicated in this research, the participants served as role models to encourage visible minority students to achieve their dreams and to seek opportunities toward their future success. The contribution of visible minority female principals serving as role models is emphasized by Bush et al. (2006), Carr (1997), Trujillo-Ball (2003), and Turner (2004). These researchers indicated that visible minority leaders were role models, and were a crucial support to the minority students and staff members. Their voice inspired others to aspire to leadership positions.

New thoughts and hope. Serving as role models and encouragement to their students and their community, the five participants in this study were also inspired by American President Barack Obama who brought hope for all visible minorities who strive to be leaders and aspire to better opportunities. The participants argued that it is time that visible minorities can fulfill their dreams, and that a person's skin color won't block their way to success. No literature reviewed related to this new thought and hope on female leadership.

Ways to Build an Inclusive School

Six ways were used by these visible minority female principals to make their schools inclusive learning environments. These include: (a) to deliver a clear mission statement; (b) to lead effectively; (c) to develop reciprocal empowerment; (d) to model an ethic of care; (e) to mentor and network; and (f) to master necessary knowledge.

A clear mission statement. The first way to build an inclusive school is to develop a clear mission. School documents revealed that all five participants had clear mission statements for their schools which guided the direction in which their schools were going, what environment they wanted to build, and suitable goals for their students' learning and fulfill their potential. This matches the work of Gardiner and Enomoto (2006), Mertz and McNeely (1998), and Holtkamp (2002) who found that female principals who had a clear mission for their school and shared this mission with the school created a strong school culture where the people who worked in the school had a sense of direction and experienced effective leadership.

Leadership styles. The second way was to use different leadership styles to build an inclusive school learning environment. The leadership styles the participants used can be summarized as inclusive leadership, transformative leadership, distributive leadership, servant leadership, and moral leadership. Some participants used these leadership styles in different ways or gave them different names; others described their leadership styles by using metaphors. I sensed that although some of the leadership styles used by the participants were not mentioned in the interviews, they showed up in their school documents.

Inclusive leadership. Some leadership styles were used more frequently than others. All five participants mentioned they used an inclusive leadership style in creating their school environment. Some used inclusive leadership in their decision making, considering all the opinions of the school staff members and school community while others showed their inclusive style in a collaborative or a democratic way. Their inclusive leadership focused on giving their staff trust and freedom to work. Some of the participants used an inclusive leadership style by asking all the staff members and

students questions about the workings of the school to make sure the process was inclusive.

This use of an inclusive leadership style by the participants in this study parallels Greenebaum et al.'s (2007) findings which emphasized inclusive leadership included all people in the decision-making process of the school community regardless of ability, gender, social class, language, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. Lumby and Coleman (2007) believed that school leaders consider diversity to be a form of inclusion. People in the school community are perceived as safer, and supportive and more active in achieving change if they are included in the decision making process. Ainscow and Kaplan (2005) emphasized that the development of an inclusive culture requires a shared commitment by staff to processes that produce an overall enhancement in participation among all participants.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership was also used in a variety of ways by the five participants. One way was to choose the best person for the program and let them be in charge. Another way was to connect transformational leadership with change to transfer and to bring about a meaningfully challenging learning experience for all students, and looking to develop and support teachers who can see the value of being involved in that change process and who wanted to willingly do the transformation. These ways of transformational leadership style parallel the research findings of Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) that, “focuses on increasing the school’s capacity to innovate . . . transformational leadership seeks to build the organization’s capacity to select its purposes and to support the survival of changes to the school’s core technology” (pp. 137-138), and Jason (2000), that transformational principals are open to change since they realize that school improvement is closely

connected with the personal and professional development of themselves and their staffs.

Two other ways of using transformational leadership were described using the metaphor of being a coach and conductor (Darlene), and being a chair (Carol). Being a coach and conductor served to move the staff to a place of growth, and to get them to reflect on their teaching practice. The metaphor of being a chair meant that the staff sat on a chair, and the principal comforted and supported them by pushing them up when needed. Then the staff will transfer the principal's support to their students. Kellerman (1984) noted the transforming leaders address different group needs. Shields (1996) believed transformational leaders are able to help community members articulate and examine their beliefs about the needs of students, and about how students, teachers, and community should interact. Conrad and Conrad's (2007) study of Caribbean female principals also found a leadership style that featured "networking, flexibility, intimacy, being personable and personal growth associated with transformational leadership" (p. 12). All these different ways of transformational leadership styles that were used matched the research findings of Kark et al. (2003) who identified four components of transformational leadership behavior: inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation.

Other leadership styles. Besides inclusive and transformational leadership, moral leadership and servant leadership were also used by some of the participants in this study. They stated that moral leadership focused on providing students with opportunities to embrace and use virtues and encouraged the students to live these values and not to be self-centered. This helped the students feel that they're responsible in creating a good school and feel they belong. Servant leadership was described by one

participant as locating herself in an inverted pyramid where instead of her being at the top, she saw herself at the bottom to make sure to meet the needs of teachers so that they can serve their students. Lumby and Coleman (2007) emphasized that leaders in school who utilized value-based inspiration leadership, and who were people-centered and morality-centered could be viewed as moral leaders and servant leaders.

Reciprocal empowerment. The third way which the participants used to build their inclusive school learning environment was reciprocal empowerment. These participants reported that empowered their staff members by trusting them and giving them freedom to make their own decisions and try new things. Reciprocal empowerment also included empowering their staff members through professional development, pointing them in the right direction, being a mentor for them, and including them in decision making. Staff members in turn helped the principals to build an effective school by being stronger in their teaching, giving their opinions, and actively getting involved in the school. The reciprocal empowerment used by the five participants parallels the research findings of Darlington and Mulvaney (2003) who studied seven different minority female principals, and described their ways of using power as reciprocal empowerment.

Ethic of care. The fourth way reported by the participants was an ethic of care. All the participants used different ways to show their ethic of care in their administrative work. An ethic of care was demonstrated in six ways: (a) making professional literature available to staff members; (b) extending praise and recognition to staff members and students on appropriate occasions; (c) offering professional assistance to teachers who needed or requested it; (d) paying special attention to the custodial staff; (e) focusing on supporting the education of the whole child; and (f) being considerate of individual staff

members needs. The literature revealed that an ethic of care is considered a common trait among female principals (Jean-Marie, 2005). Conrad and Conrad's (2007) study concluded that an ethic of care and leadership are synonymous.

Being a mentor and networking. The fifth way which the five participants used to build an inclusive school was by being a mentor and networking. All the participants admitted they benefitted from their mentors, and found that mentors were important for their leadership roles so they decided to become a mentor for their teachers and others in the district to help them to be successful in their present or future leadership positions. Networking was regarded as an important factor in their administrative work by all the participants. Networking meant communicating with others, listening to teachers, parents, and other community members, and central office personnel.

The importance of being a mentor parallels the research findings of Pacis (2005) and Scinto (2006) that mentors played a very important role in the success of visible minority female principals, especially new ones. However, visible minority female mentors are hard to find. The strategy of networking matched the findings of Young and McLeod's (2001) study where it was noted that networking with other female school administrators is a measure that helps visible minority female principals deal with daily pressures of the job. Howard and Mallory's (2008) study also showed most of the female principals built networks with other principals through their professional organization. Participants in Pacis' (2005) study emphasized that ". . . networking and developing relationships, being a listener, and honoring individuality" were important for Asian American female principals (p. 37).

Mastering necessary knowledge. The last way identified by the visible minority female principals in building an inclusive school was mastery of knowledge. As more

and more immigrants enroll in schools in Canada, it is necessary for all principals, not just visible minority female principals, to master the following: (a) a knowledge of good leadership and a good leadership practice; (b) a knowledge of effective communication, connections within and without the school; (c) conflict resolutions techniques; (d) cultural knowledge because Canada is a multicultural society and more and more immigrant children are coming to school; and (e) the ability to identify conflicts in the school and to make win-win solution which means letting both parties to the conflict feel good. This finding matched what Hopkins (2003) and Pacis (2005) indicated that the knowledge learned from the university leadership training programs assisted visible minority female principals to create their own leadership strategies and ways to solve problems. This necessary leadership knowledge and connections with other female principals became important factors to help visible minority female principals with their building effective schools.

Summary of the Research Questions

The following section provides a brief summary of the findings related to the research questions considered in this study.

Research Question #1: What Is the Path to Becoming a School Principal for Visible

Minority Females?

The analysis of the data revealed that there are six elements on the road to becoming a school principal for the five participants in this study. All the visible minority females were influenced by their parents and other family members. The participants were positively and negatively influenced by the society in which they lived and their school system organization.

Personal abilities and strengths were regarded as the foundation and necessary elements for the leadership position. The five participants all have a Master's degree, and they enjoy learning new things very much; they all had good reputations as teachers, and were teacher leaders; all were committed to widening their horizons, and making a difference in their school and for students' learning. In addition, they all have specific expertise either in curricula, or in research. These abilities and strengths also helped to build their confidence to seek the opportunity to apply for a principal position.

The road to seeking an administrative position for the five participants was not smooth. They faced the personal challenges of health issues, lack of confidence, and family issues. Their professional challenges consisted of learning about the specific facets of the school, not knowing the process of being appointed to a vice principal, and politics. Their organizational challenges included the process of appointing vice principals and principals, the hierarchy existing in the school system, and wondering if gender or race played a role in their appointment. Four participants who speak English without an accent believed the level and type of accent and the ability of clear communication might be a factor in being selected for a principal position. However, one participant who speaks English with an accent didn't think accent was a challenge for her at all. She believed the key thing is the ability to communicate well and to possess professional competency.

Although the participants experienced challenges, they also had supports which influenced them to choose administrative positions when they were teachers. These supports came from family members (husband, parents, children), or particular persons as role models and mentors and the encouragement they provided to the participants. The five participants indicated that directors, former principals, and vice principals were

important support components in the process of seeking a principalship. Interestingly, in terms of role models and mentors, these visible minority females claimed it was not necessary to have a visible minority female as a role model since all had role models and mentors, none of whom were visible minority members. One participant mentioned that one reason for her to find role models and mentors in the mainstream was because they know the Canadian educational process better.

The analysis of the data revealed that all the participants in this study engaged in similar preparatory and training activities as they moved into administrative positions. Their preparations included formal training, principal short courses, leadership workshops, and informal training such as conferences. Their teacher-leader role in their school also was regarded as a kind of preparation by the participants. One participant also indicated that the vice principal position was a preparation for the principal position for her. These preparatory and training programs helped them to understand the principal's responsibilities, and job demands, and helped them to gauge their own abilities and gain more confidence to apply for a future administrative position.

Research Question #2: What Are the Challenges Visible Minority Female Principals Experienced in Their Role as School Principals?

The analysis of the data revealed that in the principal position, the visible minority female principals faced similar personal challenges of not having enough time with their family members, conflict between work and home, as well as making time for fun. For some participants, there were personal challenges such as health issues, not being an athlete or a coach, getting their husband to understand the demands of a principal's work, long work hours, and lack of wide experiences.

Besides the personal challenges, the visible minority female principals in this study had to contend with professional challenges such as loneliness, challenges from teachers, students, parents, instructional leadership, and school. The challenges varied somewhat among the five participants due to specific school sites, situations, locations, community background, and personal experiences. In addition, two participants also had to face similar organizational challenges: powerful union involvement if the staff do not get along, the principals can't create their own teams or select their own staff, and in some cases a principal can't do anything regarding teachers even those who do not perform well.

Although gender and race were identified as challenges that the five participants had to face, the data collected revealed three different results: one participant doesn't think race and gender are negative factors for her; two of the participants believed that race and gender were challenges for their principal position, especially when parents questioned the abilities of visible minority female principals; and two participants indicated that they did not want race and gender to become a very negative impact for them so they tried to learn to see things from negative to positive.

Data analysis revealed that accent could be a challenge for the four participants who claimed they spoke English without an accent. These four participants thought the challenges with accent might be related to questioning understanding, not receiving respect, and being made fun of, and not being very patient to take the time to try to understand the speaker. One of these four participants believed that accent was related to two discriminations: oral discrimination, and visual discrimination. However, the one participant in this study who admitted speaking English with an accent did not regard accent as a challenge for her. She believed that competency and qualification were very

important for a principal position. The key thing is to have clear communication and be understood by others.

Research Question #3: What Strategies Do Visible Minority Female Principals Use to Make Their Schools More Inclusive?

The analysis of the data revealed that each of the visible minority female principals in this study had similar attributes and abilities which served as a necessary foundation for their administrative job. These included a clear vision, creating a positive learning environment, a strong sense of confidence in decision making and problem solving, love for students, good mediation skills, and other qualities such as having a strong personality, enthusiasm, being joyful in the job, working hard, and multi-tasking skills. These attributes and abilities served as the foundation for the leadership position and help them to build a more inclusive school.

Besides the attributes and abilities to build an inclusive school, visible minority female principals also benefitted from the supports they received. These important supports primarily came from central office personnel such as superintendents and other office members. They offered advice and good resources to these participants. The second type of support which these participants received was mentorship. The central office provided mentors for the five participants when they began to assume their principal roles. The principal association was another source of support that the participants received. There were different kinds of leadership training and study groups organized by the principal association so that they had the opportunity to discuss things and learn from each other. They communicated with each other and received advice which helped them to improve their leadership skills. The other support these participants received came from their school staff members. These principals worked as

a team with their staff and they received support from their staff. The parental community was another source of help. The parent community assisted with fund raising, was involved in all kinds of school activities, and served as volunteers. The last support, and the most important support, came from their family members, such as husband, children, and parents who provided advice, opinions, encouragement, and understanding.

Data showed that the five participants used six specific ways to build an inclusive school. They all had a clear mission statement for their school to share and to follow. They chose to use different leadership styles such as inclusive leadership, transformative leadership, distributive leadership, servant leadership, and moral leadership in ways which suited their particular school. Some participants called these leadership styles by using different names while others described their leadership styles by using metaphors. In addition, strategies such as reciprocal empowerment, an ethic of care, being a mentor and networking with other principals and officers in the central office, and mastering necessary knowledge for the principal position were also helpful to these visible minority female principals to build an inclusive school. In short, four themes describe the building of their inclusive school learning environments by the five participants in this study. Their attributes and abilities provide the foundation for their leadership roles. The supports they received strengthened their abilities on their administrative jobs. Their minority status added extra support to their principal position, and the six strategies they used in their daily principal work contributed to their success as principals.

In addition to the research findings based on each research question, additional findings found in this study as shown in Chapter Five are included. Three of the five

participants showed their appreciation for participating in this study and indicated that answering all the questions made them reflect about their job and their philosophy of education. All the five participants understood that the definition of visible minority is related to a person's skin color, but one participant, Ann, stated although she was a visible minority person, she felt she did not fit into her home culture when she visited the country where she was born. Carol felt puzzled by the fact that even though 90% of the student population in her former school was not white, the coloured students were still called visible minority. There are some White Europeans who cannot speak English but they are not considered as visible minority and they are treated differently from visible minority members who speaking English with an accent. Darlene has three definitions of visible minority. The first matched the Canadian Government's definition which states that visible minority is a person who is non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color. The second definition is according to the percentage of population in a community which can be defined as visible minority. For example, if 90% of a school's students are colored, the Caucasians should be the visible minority. The third one is that if people speak with a strong accent, the person should be a visible minority.

Four of the participants did not regard themselves as visible minority principals because they never thought that way. One participant regarded herself as visible minority female principals and believed it was asset for her. However, the participants admitted they were different from white female principals in ways other than skin color because they had different experiences and different understandings of their students, especially visible minority students. All five participants denied belonging to the mainstream but admitted they had been accepted by the mainstream. However, one participant said she always competed with the mainstream. Interestingly enough, another

participant said she wanted to fit into the mainstream during her early administrative years but didn't have that kind of feeling any more. She is proud of what and who she is today.

Re-Conceptualized Framework

I had originally conceptualized the visible minority female principalship based on the American literature available on visible minority female principalship. The conceptual framework positioned visible minority female principalship in the center of four related conditions. Visible minority female leadership was first looked at in the past and present Canadian multicultural and diversity context. Educational leadership is the second condition in the conceptual framework. Female educational leadership is the third condition. Based on the foundation of the other three elements, the center of the framework is visible minority female principalship. Visible minority female principalship was presented by focusing on the path to the principalship, the challenges faced, and the strategies used in their principal position. All these conditions are maintained in the re-conceptualized framework except for some of the specific aspects due to the findings of this study.

The path to the principalship in the re-conceptualized framework includes six aspects: influence, personal abilities and strengths, challenges, supports, preparatory and training programs, and the process to achieve the principal position. Compared with the original framework, the data in this study did not show the *expectations* from family. However, data added *the process to achieve the principal position* and *preparatory and training programs* to the path of the principalship. The interaction of the six elements as shown in Figure 4 indicates that family influences helped to build personal abilities and strengths, the preparatory and training programs enhanced personal abilities and

strengths, and the preparatory and training programs are a form of support. The five aspects which were influences, personal abilities and strengths, challenges, supports, and preparatory and training programs all support the process to achieve the principal position. The six aspects paved the path to the principalship. The path to the principalship contributes to the strategies used.

The challenges faced in the principalship included personal, professional, and organizational challenges, gender and race, and accent and related discrimination. Compared with the original framework, the language proficiency is replaced by *accent and related discrimination* on the basis of the findings of this study. The interaction of the five elements as shown in Figure 4 indicates that: accent and related discrimination are influenced by race; accent and related discrimination influence and are connected with personal, professional, and organizational challenges; and race and gender raised personal professional and organizational challenges.

The strategies used by visible minority female principals include four elements: attributes and abilities necessary for the administrative job, support systems, the contribution of minority status, and strategies to build an inclusive school. The interrelationship between and among these four elements is that the attributes and abilities necessary for the administrative job, the support systems visible minority female principals receive, and the contribution of minority status all serve as a foundation and contribution to the strategies to build an inclusive school. The factors within the strategies to build an inclusive school are all related to one another.

As shown in Figure 4, the interrelation among the three aspects of the visible minority female leadership from a broad view can be expressed as both the path to the

principalship and the challenges in the principalship contributing to the strategies for visible minority female principals to build inclusive schools.

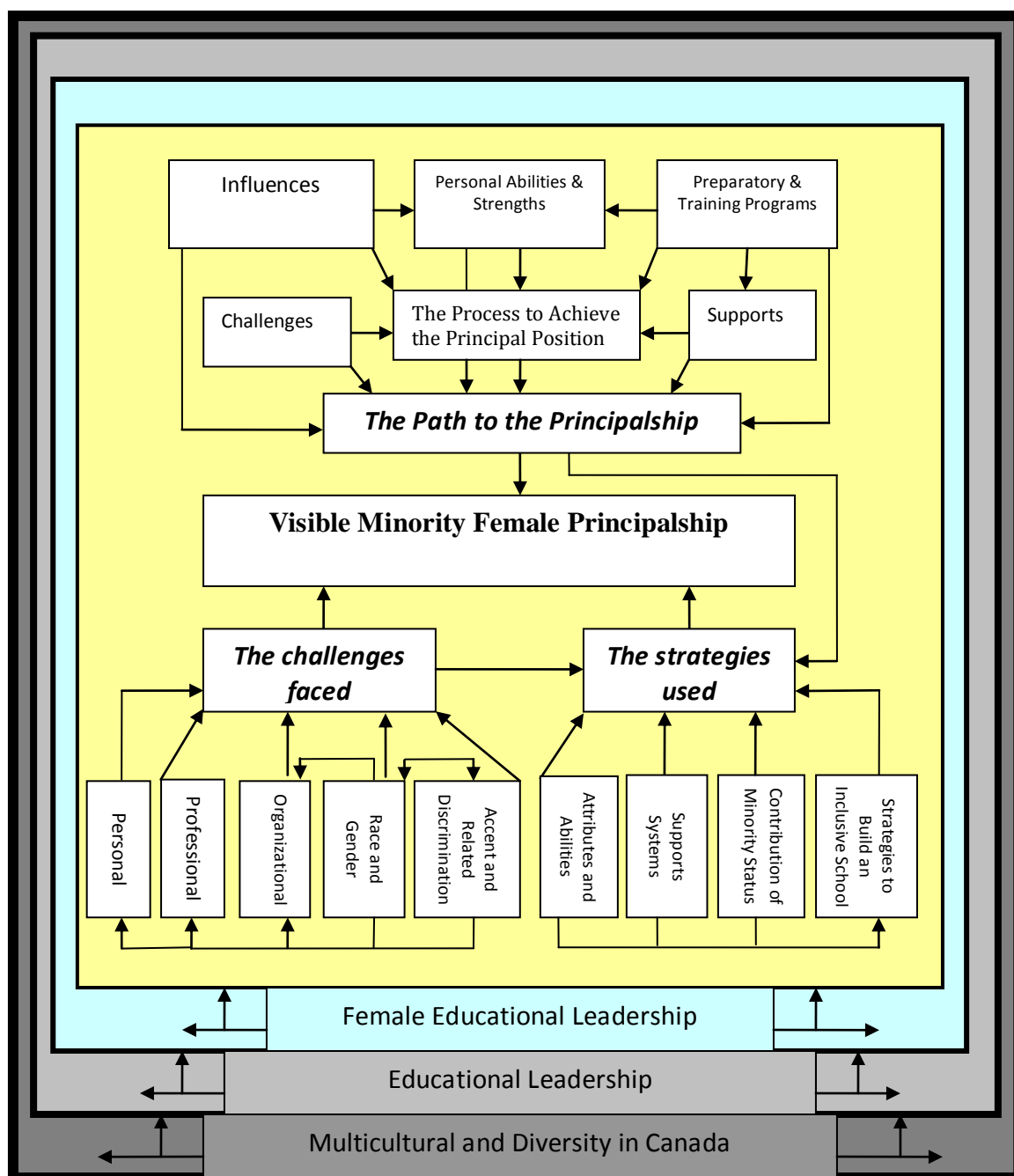


Figure 4. Re-conceptualized Framework: The Visible Minority Female Principalship

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, four sets of recommendations are made in order to encourage visible minority female teachers to become principals, and to assist school systems support visible minority female principals. The first set of recommendations is for visible minority females who are currently school principals. The second set is for visible minority female teachers who aspire to a principalship. The third set is for Boards of Education. The fourth set of recommendations is for Boards of Education and universities with respect to leadership training programs.

Recommendations for Current Visible Minority Female Principals

Visible minority female educators who currently hold principal positions are encouraged to:

1. View yourself not as a visible minority female principal but as a principal who happens to be a visible minority and a female. You are a principal first.
2. Keep positive about all your experiences. Ask yourself how you can make things better. Search out information sources and professional development opportunities.
3. Have a vision.
4. Know the community that you serve. Make connections with your Board of Education, community, parents, staff, and students. Be visible and be connected.
5. Have confidence in yourself. Be assertive but kind and fair.
6. Network. Find a mentor in whom you can confide and who can guide you. Talk with and share with a group or individuals who are administrators.
7. Don't be afraid to ask when you need help.
8. Think about and read what good principals and leaders do.

9. Do what your heart tells you. You need to trust your abilities and yourself.

Recommendations for Visible Minority Females Who Aspire to a Principalship

Visible minority female teachers who desire to be principals should:

1. Take steps to make it happen.
2. Take step to improve your language communication skills.
3. Pursue graduate studies.
4. Be a teacher leader within and beyond your school.
5. Be really good at what you are doing because the Board of Education wants to place the best person for the job.
6. Be prepared. Read and take leadership courses.
7. Be a good role model for visible minority children.
8. Develop a good network of people to be able to get resources, and also to find opportunities to take on leadership roles not just at the school level but at the district level.
9. Cultivate your ability to communicate your ideas well, to have strong knowledge and understanding of what education is all about.
10. Be prepared to willingly serve the community in which you work.
11. Always reflect upon your teaching, your behaviour, your beliefs, your conversations with people, and always think and remind yourself to be positive.

Recommendations for Boards of Education

It is recommended that Boards of Education and the Ministries pursue practices or introduce new policies to attract, encourage, and support visible minority female

educators who aspire to become administrators, and to provide more assistance to those who already are in the principalship.

1. Establish hiring policies which attract and support qualified minorities. It's important that visible minority teachers who are qualified are interviewed.
2. Promote understanding of all cultures is important not only through festivals but through awareness of culture and environment and developing core values in the curriculum.
3. Provide opportunities to highlight the achievements of district principals.
4. Provide mentors to newly appointed principals.

Recommendations for Leadership Training Programs

As the student population becomes more multicultural and diverse, there is a need to recruit visible minority female teachers into educational leadership positions. Boards of education need to provide opportunities to visible minority female teachers who are interested in leadership positions by providing training programs and helping them to become qualified candidates. For those people who are already in the principal position, they also need training programs to improve their leadership skills related to multiculturalism and diversity in schools. The participants in this study suggested the following training programs, based on their experiences as participants in Master's degree programs and training programs:

1. The relationship with the wider community is important for schools. Strategies on how to connect with the community and strategies needed to build relationships with them need to be discussed.

2. Encourage principal candidates and aspirants to spend time shadowing other females to learn what they do every day and to learn the different ways in which people handle things and successfully deal with issues.
3. Provide problem solving courses that teach a step-by-step method of how to work through a situation, especially cultural conflict.
4. Before principal candidates are placed in a school, they should be made aware of the economic, social, and cultural things that are happening in the school neighbourhood to which they will be assigned.
5. Principals need training in non-violent crisis intervention, legal issues, and basic counselling skills.
6. Leadership training courses assist principals and aspirants to learn about leadership styles and to do assessment inventories where individuals examine the way they lead.

There is no research on visible minority female principals in Canada. The stories of these five participants need to be heard in order to learn about multicultural education, diversity, and leadership. These stories enable others to reflect upon, understand, empathize with, and react to the stories of race, gender, and leadership. This study provides examples of successful visible minority female principals who have advanced in leadership positions using their own styles, proving that although they have adapted their thinking to meet some social expectations, they are proud of being women, visible minorities, and Canadian.

Implications for Further Research

Trujillo-Ball (2003) and Bloom and Erlandson (2003) found that visible minority female principals have not been given attention in the research arena. No research on visible minority female principalship was found in Canada. The five successful visible minority female principals in this study spoke at length about their minority status and how they feel they are positive role models for their students. As more and more visible minority students attend Canadian schools, it would be very beneficial for students to see that visible minority women are capable of successfully leading schools. The work life experiences of five visible minority female principals in this study, their path to the principalship, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they used also provide encouragement for those visible minority females who aspire to be future principals. I hope that more extensive studies about visible minority female principals should be undertaken. This further investigation could focus on the following topics:

Topics for Further Study

1. This study contained a relatively small visible minority population in Western Canada. It would be beneficial to enlarge the sample to ascertain if the findings extend to a larger population.
2. It would be worthwhile to do a comparative study of different ethnic minorities to see what similarities and/or differences, if any, there are among their administrative work lives.
3. Difficulties surrounding “accent” is an important area in this study. More research related to accent needs to be done.
4. This study revealed the perceptions and preferences of visible minority female principals. It would be beneficial to examine visible minority male principals’

perceptions, white principals' perceptions, and system leaders' (directors' and superintendents') perceptions of the work life of visible minority female principals.

5. Research needs to be done on exploring the public's perception of visible minority female principals.
6. More research needs to be done on the social obstacles that hinder visible minority women from gaining leadership positions in education.
7. How do visible minority female educational leaders deal with the conflict between their administrative work and their cultural traditions and values, and how does their work influence their personal lives?

Concluding Comments

As more immigrants come to Canada, the school population is becoming more diverse and multicultural. Based on this reality, and in order to better serve the ethnically diverse students in the schools, it is the time to do research on the work life experiences of visible minority female principals. One's life experiences shape a person's worldview and also shape a person's goals, values, and beliefs. This research on the work life experiences of five visible minority females principals provides important information and a clearer picture of five participants on their path to becoming principals, the challenges they faced in their principal position, and the strategies they used to build inclusive school learning environments as well as how these experiences formed and influenced their principalship and their beliefs in education.

Visible minority female principals spoke about their experiences on the path to pursue their principalship. The data analysis revealed that there were more commonalities than differences among the five participants. These visible minority

females have identified many family, social, and organizational influences on their road to pursuing a principal position which helped them to set their goals toward an administrative position. They all agreed that they had unique personal abilities and strengths which helped them qualify for a principal position. Although there were some personal, professional, and organizational challenges which blocked their way to the principalship, these participants also claimed they received many supports. These supports, together with the preparatory and training programs they received, helped them to become well-prepared for their future principal position. The process to achieve the principal position for these five visible minority females basically differed only in the amount of time required for some things to happen.

The five participants stated that the challenges they faced in their principal position consisted of personal challenges, professional challenges, organizational challenges, gender and race, and accent and related discriminations. Although they endured the same challenges, they had to deal with them in different ways. They all regarded these challenges as opportunities to learn and to grow. They also believed that coping with these challenges helped them to strengthen their abilities, and made them more experienced in their principal position.

The five visible minority female principals described the strategies they used to build an inclusive school learning environment. They confirmed their attributes and abilities necessary for the administrative job provided the first foundation for their leadership roles. The supports they received strengthened their abilities in their administrative jobs. They especially emphasized that their minority status played an important and useful role in supporting their work in the principal position. In addition, six specific ways were used by them to make their school more inclusive: to deliver a

clear mission statement, to lead effectively; to develop reciprocal empowerment, to model an ethic of care, to mentor and network, and to master necessary knowledge.

Addressing the research questions that guided this study served to attempt to fill a gap in the literature on visible minority female principalship in Canada. The area of visible minority female principalship needs to be further researched and recognized so that the visible minority female teachers and other visible minority females have examples and role models to follow and to emulate. This study contributes to understanding the unique and individual visible minority female principals in their principal position, especially their path to the principalship, the challenges they faced in their principal position, and the strategies they used to make their schools more inclusive. The results of this study contribute to the research literature on successful visible minority females in leadership positions.

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Appendix A: Application for Approval of Research Protocol



Application for Approval of Research Protocol
Submitted to
University of Saskatchewan, Behavioural Research Ethics Board

1. **Name of supervisor:** Dr. Sheila-Carr Stewart
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education,
University of Saskatchewan

Name of researcher: Bing Cui, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education,
University of Saskatchewan

1b. **Anticipated start date of research study:** November, 2008
Expected completion date of the study: November, 2010

2. **Title of Study:**

An Exploratory Study of the Administrative Work Life Experiences of Visible Minority Female School Principals

3. **Abstract:**

As more females are being selected into educational leadership positions, female principal leadership is gradually being more increasingly researched, particularly by American scholars. Smulyan's (2000) study showed that females are overrepresented in elementary schools and under-represented in secondary schools. Wesson (1998) found that the middle school level had the highest representation of African-American principals (9.3%) and Hispanic principals (2.1%). However, the number of visible minority female principals in this study was not indicated. Love (2007) found that in the year 2000 in the United States, 44% of all principals were female. Of this group of female principals, 10% were African American, and 4% were Hispanic. The research on visible minority female school principal leadership is limited. In Canada, no research on visible minority female school principalship could be located. Their career path toward to pursue a principal position, their obstacles, challenges, and strategies intertwined together in their administrative work life keep silent and unknown. As Canadian

educational context become more diverse and multicultural, the research on visible minority female principalship becomes necessary. This is also the focus of this study.

The main research question which guides this study is how educational administration is experienced from a female, visible minority point of view in the western Canadian educational context. The three subquestions are: a) What is the path to becoming a school principal for visible minority females? b) What are the challenges visible minority female principals experience in their role as school principals? and c) What strategies do visible minority female principals use to make their schools more inclusive?

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the administrative work life experiences of visible minority female school principals in Canadian schools. It is hoped that this study can fulfill four objectives. First, the study will allow the voices of visible minority female principals to be heard. Second, the barriers to success and acceptance which visible minority female principals experience can be identified and better understood. Third, readers will situate the leadership styles of visible minority female principals in terms of Canada's current multicultural and diverse educational context. Fourth, the strategies that contribute to successful administrative experiences for visible minority female principals need to be identified.

This study provides information that will help visible minority females make choices regarding a possible career as a principal in the K-12 public education system. It will help visible minority females prepare for the challenges that a K-12 school principal position will bring in regard to their attitudes and behavior and how these affect their leadership styles. It can help society to better understand the challenges faced by visible minority females making the choice to become a principal. It provides information to enable readers to use the female leaders in this study as models in analyzing their own leadership characteristics. It provides information to those in positions of authority for barrier removal for visible minority females seeking positions of school-based leadership and females in positions of school-based leadership. It could provide universities and colleges information about any special needs for preparing visible minority females for educational leadership roles. It could result in the formation of support groups of visible minority female administrators. This study will contribute to filling the gap in the literature on visible minority female leadership in Canada and suggest areas for further significant research. This study is significant in educational administration and leadership and reporting information that will prove beneficial to educational decision makers.

4. **Funding:** Self-funded
5. **Expertise:** Not applicable
6. **Conflict of Interest:** Not applicable
7. **Participants:**

Purposeful sampling is an appropriate way to select the participants for this study because of the seemingly small number of visible minority female principals in Canada, and in western Canada in particular that is available. The unique-case approach, defined by Goeta and Le Compete in Merriam's (1988) work as unique or rare attributes inherent in a population or unusual ethnic composition, is appropriate for this study of visible minority female principals. This study will involve four visible minority female principals from western Canada which are a unique population. An effort will be made to locate four participants from four different ethnic backgrounds. The participants must be visible minority females who are currently working as a principal in a public education (K-12) system. The individual participants will be identified through referrals from academics, friends and acquaintances, and school division personnel. The participants are restricted to visible minority female principals because that is the focus of this study.

7a. Recruitment Material:

The recruitment material will include the following:

- a) Letter of Invitation to Directors of Education (see Appendix C)
- b) Letter of Invitation to the Participants (see Appendix D)
- c) Interview Guides (see Appendix E)
- d) Consent Form (see Appendix F)
- e) Data/Transcript Release Form (see Appendix G)

8. Consent:

Identified participants will receive a letter of invitation inviting them to participate in the study (see Appendix D). The letter will outline the purpose and details of the study. A copy of the interview questions (see Appendix E) will accompany this letter. Participants will also receive the consent form (see Appendix F) which indicates the participant's rights and the ethical standards of the study. Participants will be provided with a self-addressed stamped envelope for convenient return of the consent form.

It will be clearly stated both within the letter of invitation and within the consent form that participation within the study is entirely voluntary. Prior to each interview, I will review the participant's rights and the ethical standards in relation to the study. I will review the participant's rights to privacy, anonymity, and withdrawal at any point of the research without penalty. Upon withdrawal of participation, all information collected will be destroyed. The invitation letter and consent form include my contact information. All participants will sign and date the consent form and give the consent form to me before interviews begin. All forms requiring signatures will be signed in duplicate. One form will remain with the participants; one form will be collected by me.

Prior to each interview, I will seek permission for the interview to be tape recorded. If any participant is uncomfortable with being tape recorded, I will not tape the interview; rather, I will take notes during the interview. Following each interview,

copies of the written transcript/notes of the interview will be mailed to each participant. The participants will be provided with the opportunity to read the transcript/notes and alter, delete, and change any information they deem fit. To acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what was said in the interview and to authorize the release of the transcript to me, the participants will sign a Data/Transcript Release Form (see Appendix G). I will maintain the confidentiality of the participants through the utilization of pseudonyms for the participants.

9. Methods/Procedures:

This will be a qualitative case study base on a postpositivist perspective. The data collection procedures are mainly focused on semi-structured in-depth interviews which Seidman (2006) defined as “an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). Three in-depth interviews will be conducted with each participant. The first interview focuses on the participants’ life history. The second interview, the most important interview, explores the details of the participants’ experiences related to the topic area of the study. The third interview focuses on reflection on the meaning of the participants’ experiences. In addition, the researcher will conduct documents and records analyses, and maintain the researcher’s reflective journals to triangulate the interview data and to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Data collection will be conducted from November, 2008 to November, 2010. It is anticipated that the time for each interview will be about 1-2 hours. Each interview will be transcribed and a copy of each participant’s transcript will be provided to each participant for review and editing. Questions for each interview will be sent to the participants prior to the interview. The interview questions are outlined in Appendix E.

Purposeful sampling based on a unique-case approach will be utilized to identify self-declared visible minority female principals in western Canada. Potential participants will be selected from referrals from academics, friends and acquaintances, and school division personnel.

10. Storage of Data:

During the study, all data collected will be securely stored with the researcher in the Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan. Upon completion of the study, Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, research supervisor, will ensure the data, including interview transcripts, tape recordings, and my reflective journals, are stored in a secure location for a minimum of five years. After five years, all documents pertaining to this study will be destroyed.

11. Dissemination of Results:

Participants will be informed that the data collected and the results from this study will be used in my doctoral dissertation. The results of this study will be shared with the faculty of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan and may later be published in scholarly journals or contribute to conference presentations.

12. Risk, Benefits, and Deception:

Risks:

The risks for participating in this study are minimal. Participants will be made aware of the purpose of the study and why they have been invited to participate. Participants will also be made aware that participation in the study is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time without penalty of any kind. Participants will be informed that if they choose to withdraw from the study, their audio recordings and interview data will be destroyed. All measures will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants, and pseudonyms will be used when referring to individual participants and their schools and school divisions in data reporting. However, because the participants from this study have been selected from a small group of visible minority from different ethnic groups, it is possible that they may be identifiable by other people. To minimize this possibility, pseudonyms will be used to maintain anonymity, confidentiality and privacy.

Benefits:

The study will be a window to allow society to learn about the reality of visible minority female school principal leadership, to provide assistance and hope for visible minority women who are presently seeking or considering school-based administrative positions, or currently hold school-based administrative positions (Hopkins, 2003; Pacis, 2004). It is hoped that this study will urge educational authorities to introduce policy and decision making on supporting visible minority female leadership in diverse and multicultural Canada school context. This study will contribute to filling the gap in the literature on visible minority female school principal leadership in Canada, assist in better understanding the areas of visible minority female educational school leadership, and suggest areas for further significant research.

Deception:

It is not the intent of the researcher to deceive the participants, schools, school divisions, or the University of Saskatchewan through this study. The researcher's intentions are purely academic. Any subsequent desires or benefits other than the completion of this study (e.g., publications, conference presentations) have been admitted.

13. Confidentiality:

The participants will be informed that anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and the location will be maintained throughout the study by using pseudonyms. The documents containing the real names of the participants and other identifying information will be kept separately from the audio tapes, transcripts,

analyses, and any written memos or summaries which result from this study other than the consent form.

14. Data/Transcript Release:

Following each in-depth interview, copies of written transcripts will be mailed to the participants. After reviewing the transcript of a given interview, the participants will be provided with the opportunity to add, delete, or change any information they feel needs to be altered. Participants will have an opportunity to review their portion of the final transcript to ensure it accurately reflects what they said or intended to say. Participants have the right to clarify, add, or remove any or all of their responses. To acknowledge that the transcripts accurately reflect what was said in the interview and to authorize the release of the transcript to me, the participants will sign a Data/Transcript Release Form (see Appendix G) after each transcript review and following the review of the final report.

15. Debriefing and Feedback:

At the conclusion of each taped interview participants will be reminded of the next steps that will be taken in the study and will be invited to ask questions of the researcher. Participants will be informed that once the dissertation is printed, the document will be available as a resource in the following two centers: The Education Library, College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan; the Educational Administration office, College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. I will also send a copy of complete dissertation to each of the participant.

16. Required Signatures:

This proposal has been reviewed and is recommended for approval.

Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart,
Research supervisor and Department Head
Educational Administration

Date

Bing Cui (Applicant)
Ph.D. Candidate

Date

17. Required Contact Information:

Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
28 Campus Dr.
Saskatoon, SK
S7N 0X1
(306) 966-7611
(306) 966-7020 (fax)
sheila.carr-stewart@usask.ca

Bing Cui
Box 9016
Saskatoon, SK
S7K 7E7
(306) 966-7678 (office)
(306) 382-0242 (home & fax)
bic116@mail.usask.ca

Appendix B: Ethics Approval



**UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN**

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB)

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Sheila Carr-Stewart

DEPARTMENT
Educational Administration

BEH#
08-280

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CONDUCTED
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Sk

STUDENT RESEARCHERS
Bing Cui

TITLE
An Exploratory Study of the Administrative Work Life Experiences of Visible Minority Female School Principals

ORIGINAL REVIEW DATE
04-Dec-2008

APPROVAL ON
08-Dec-2008

APPROVAL OF:
Ethics Application
Consent Protocol

EXPIRY DATE
07-Dec-2009

Full Board Meeting ☐

Date of Full Board Meeting:

Delegated Review ☒

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics_review/

John Rigby, Chair
University of Saskatchewan
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Appendix C: Letter of Invitation to Directors of Education

LETTER OF INVITATION TO DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION

Bing Cui
Box 9016
Saskatoon, SK S7K 7E7
Tel: (306) 966-7678
Fax: (306) 382-0242
E-mail: bic116@mail.usask.ca

November 1, 2008

Dear Sir/Madam;

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. I am conducting research on the title of *An Exploratory Study of the Administrative Work Life Experiences of Visible Minority Female Principals*. It is hoped that this study can fulfill four objectives. First, the study will allow the voices of visible minority female principals to be heard. Second, the barriers to success and acceptance which visible minority female principals experience can be identified and better understood. Third, readers will situate the leadership styles of visible minority female principals in terms of Canada's current multicultural and diverse educational context. Fourth, the strategies that contribute to successful administrative experiences for visible minority female principals need to be identified.

The study has been approved by the Department of Educational Administration and the Behavioral Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan. I am seeking permission from you to contact any female principals who are self-declared visible minority in your school division to assist me with this study. The research will involve in-depth interviews, documents and records analyses, and the researcher's reflective research journals to collect data.

The visible minority school population in Canadian schools is increasing. This study of visible minority female principals will describe the real world of these principals, their career path, leadership styles, the challenges they face and strategies to overcome the challenges. It is hoped that the study will encourage more visible minority female teachers to apply for leadership positions. It is also hoped that this study will provide an opportunity for visible minority female principals to learn from each other and to reflect on their role as principal.

I wish to assure you that every effort will be made to avoid identifying any school, your school division, or principal in the interviews, documents and records analyses, researcher's reflective research journals and by using pseudonyms.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you require additional information, you may contact Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, my advisor, at 306-966-7611, or myself, at 306-966-7678. If you prefer, you are welcome to use any of the alternate contact options listed at the top of this letter.

Thank you for considering this request.

Yours sincerely,

Bing Cui

Appendix D: Letter of Request for Participation to Principals

LETTER OF REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION TO PRINCIPALS

Bing Cui
 Box 9016
 Saskatoon, SK
 S7K 7E7
 Tel: (306) 966-7678
 Fax: (306) 382-0242
 E-mail: bic116@mail.usask.ca

March 8, 2008

Dear Participant;

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. I am conducting a research on the title of *An Exploratory Study of the Administrative Work life Experiences of Visible Minority Female Principals*. It is hoped that this study can fulfill four objectives. First, the study will allow the voices of visible minority female principals to be heard. Second, the barriers to success and acceptance which visible minority female principals experience can be identified and better understood. Third, readers will situate the leadership styles of visible minority female principals in terms of Canada's current multicultural and diverse educational context. Fourth, the strategies that contribute to successful administrative experiences for visible minority female principals need to be identified.

Your name was forwarded to me as a potential participant in this study because you are a self-declared visible minority female principal. Your director of education has given me permission to contact you and to invite you to participate in this study. Thus, I am inviting you to participate in this study. The research will require three semi-structured in-depth interviews of about 1-2 hours. Documents and records analyses, and the researcher's reflective research journals will also be used to collect data.

The visible minority school population in Canadian schools is increasing. This study of visible minority female principals will describe the real world of these principals, their career path, leadership styles, the challenges they face and strategies to overcome the challenges. It is hoped that the study will encourage more visible minority female teachers to apply for leadership positions. It is also hoped that this study will provide an opportunity for visible minority female principals to learn from each other and to reflect on their role as principal.

I wish to assure you that every effort will be made to avoid identifying any school, your school division, or principal in the interviews, documents and records analyses, researcher's reflective research journals and by using pseudonyms.

I have enclosed two documents for you. A copy of the questions that will be asked at the first interview are included. Questions for each subsequent interview will be made available to you at the conclusion of each interview. If you agree to participate in this study, please sign the Consent Form and return it to me in the stamped envelope I have provided.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you require additional information, you may contact Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, my advisor, at 306-966-7611, or myself, at 306-966-7678. If you prefer, you are welcome to use any of the alternate contact options listed at the top of this letter.

Thank you for considering this request.

Yours sincerely,

Bing Cui

Appendix E: In-depth Interview Guides

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDES

First Interview Questions:

Tell me about yourself:

1. What ethnic group do you self-identify with?
2. What country were you born in? If not Canada, how long have you been in Canada?
3. Are you a first, second, third, or fourth generation Canadian?
4. What do the terms *multicultural* and *diversity* mean to you?
5. How have society, family and organizations influenced you as a visible minority female?
6. What does the term *visible minority* mean to you?
7. Tell me about your childhood and youth.
8. Tell me about your years and experiences as a student in school.
9. Tell me about your university years.
10. How many years of classroom teaching have you had?
11. What classroom assignments/grades have you had in your career as a teacher?
12. How many years have you been a principal?
13. Describe all the different principalships you have held so far.
14. What other educational positions did you hold prior to or after becoming a principal?
15. What does the term *visible minority female principal* mean to you?
16. How have society, family, and organizations influenced your career as a visible minority female principal?
17. Is there anything else you would like to add to what you have told me?
18. I was able to learn many things about your school from your school's website. Is there anything else you can tell me about your school (e.g., history, community, special projects)?

Second Interview Questions:

I am interested in your educational administrative experiences:

1. What interested you to become a principal?
2. Describe the path you took to obtain a principalship.
3. Describe the preparatory program/training you received prior to becoming a principal.
4. What supports did you receive when you first aspired to a principalship or thought about becoming a principal?
5. What kinds of supports are you receiving or have you received in your role as a principal?

6. What were the personal challenges for you to becoming a principal?
7. What were the professional challenges for you to becoming a principal?
8. What were the organizational challenges for you to becoming a principal?
9. What kinds of challenges are you facing in your present position as a principal?
10. How does your minority status contribute to your work as a principal?
11. Describe your leadership style(s).
12. What qualities, strengths and skills do you feel you have that assist you in fulfilling your role as a principal?
13. Name the qualities, strengths, or skills that you feel are essential to becoming a successful visible minority female principal.
14. Describe the professional development necessary for visible minority female principals.
15. Describe the moment/occasion when you felt you were accepted as a “real” principal by your staff, students, community, peers and school board.
16. What advice can you give to other visible minority female principals?
17. What advice can you give to visible minority female teachers who aspire to become principals?
18. Is there anything else you would like to add to what you have told me?

The Third Interview Questions

According to their answers of the first and second interviews, I made the third interview question separately for 5 participants.

Darlene:

1. You talked a lot about relationships and connections. Do you think it is very important to have connections and relationship with the school district central office? Does it help to make your job much easier?
2. You mentioned mentorship in your interviews. Do you think it is necessary to have a minority female principal as a mentor for yourself, for other visible minority female principals, or for any visible minority female teachers who want to eventually become principals?
3. You mentioned that even though the boy from Fiji has a strong British accent, the students all accept that. You also mentioned that if a Korean boy has an accent, people will have a different view of him because it is an ethnic accent. Do you think this is a kind of discrimination or something else?
4. After we finished the last interview, I remembered you having a lot of thoughts about how your visible minority heritage assists you to understand and help students with different cultural backgrounds in your school. Can you give more details of this?
5. Being a visible minority female school principal, do you think you feel you are the same as or different from white female school principals (except for

color)? If you feel you are different from them, please explain in what ways you feel different.

6. In your interview you said you avoided talking about your visible minority status. Does this mean that you think that you belong to the main stream culture or that people have accepted you as one of the main stream?
7. The literature mentions that visible minority female principals use *reciprocal empowerment* in their schools. *Reciprocal empowerment* means the principals empower those they work with (teachers and staff members) and these principals, in turn, receive power and help from them. In your administrative work, do you think you use *reciprocal empowerment*? If you do, can you give me an example?
8. Female leadership is also connected with an “ethic of care”. In your interview, I noticed that even though you did not use the words ethic of care, I sensed that you practice an ethic of care. Can you talk a little more about this?
9. Do you think race and gender have had or have a negative impact for you as a female leader? Please elaborate.
10. Who was or were role models for you when you were thinking about becoming a principal? Do you have a role model (role models) at the present time? If you had or currently have a role model(s), can you talk about how this influenced you?
11. Reflecting on your administrative career, what kind of preparation and training programs do you think might help aspiring visible minority females to prepare for a principalship?
12. Reflecting on your administrative career, what kinds of continuing professional development activities should visible minority female principals engage in?
13. In terms of visible minority female principal leadership, if you were given an opportunity to advise policy makers in education or government, what advice would you give them?
14. Have you ever or do you talk to your students about the fact that you are a member of a visible minority group?
15. As a female principal, is there a difference in your relationships with the female staff members as compared to your relationships with the male staff members?
16. Can you share your future plans and aspirations?

Betty:

1. The attitude of the dean of the college of education to you as a visible minority person seems to be a kind of racism or discrimination or prejudice. Do you think this is the general ideology of this college of education or just one person’s narrow mind?
2. Imagine that you spoke English with an accent. Do you think you would still get your present principal position? And if you had an accent and you worked as a principal as you do now, do you think people would treat you differently?

3. Being a visible minority female school principle, do you think you are the same as or different from a white female school principal (except for color)? If you feel you are different from them, please explain in what way(s) you feel different.
4. In your interview you said you avoided talking your visible minority part. Does this mean that you think that you belong to the main stream culture or that you think or feel people have accepted you as one of the main stream?
5. The literature mentions that visible minority female principals use reciprocal empowerment in their schools. Reciprocal empowerment means the principals empower those they work with (teachers and staff members) and these principals, in turn, receive power and help from them. In your administrative work, do you think you use reciprocal empowerment? If you do, can you give me an example?
6. Female leadership is also connected with an “ethic of care”. In your interview, I noticed that even though you did not use the words ethic of care, I sensed that you practice an ethic of care. Can you talk a little more about this?
7. Do you think race and gender have had or have a negative impact for you as a female leader? Please elaborate.
8. Who was or were role models for you when you were thinking about becoming a principal? Do you have a role model (role models) at the present time? If you had or currently have a role model(s), can you talk about how this influenced you?
9. Reflecting on your administrative career, what kind of preparation and training programs do you think might help aspiring visible minority females to prepare for a principalship?
10. Reflecting on your administrative career, what kinds of continuing professional development activities should visible minority female principals engage in?
11. In terms of visible minority female principal leadership, if you were given an opportunity to advise policy makers in education or government, what advice would you give them?
12. Have you ever or do you talk to your students about the fact that you are a member of a visible minority group?
13. As a female principal, is there a difference in your relationships with the female staff members as compare to your relationships with the male staff members?
14. Can you share your future plans and aspirations?

Eva:

1. In terms of mentors, do you think it is necessary for visible minority female principals to have a visible minority mentor or does it matter?
2. You mentioned in your interview that minority female school principals need to network with the main stream. Do you think it is also important to network with minority school principals? Please elaborate.
3. Do you think people who speak English with an accent have a problem to get a principal position? If they are already in the position, do you think accent will influence their job? In what ways?
4. Being a visible minority female school principal, do you think you are the same as or different from white female school principals (except for color)? If you feel you are different from them, please explain in what ways you feel different.

5. In your interview you said you don't often think of yourself as a member of a visible minority group. Does this mean that you think that you belong to the main stream culture or that people have accepted you as one of the main stream?
6. The literature mentions that visible minority female principals use reciprocal empowerment in their schools. Reciprocal empowerment means the principals empower those they work with (teachers and staff members) and these principals, in turn, receive power and help from them. In your administrative work, do you think you use reciprocal empowerment? If you do, can you give me an example?
7. Female leadership is also connected with an "ethic of care". In your interview, I noticed that even though you did not use the words ethic of care, I sensed that you practice an ethic of care. Can you talk a little more about this?
8. Do you think race and gender have had or have a negative impact for you as a female leader? Please elaborate.
9. Who was or were role models for you when you were thinking about becoming a principal? Do you have a role model (role models) at the present time? If you had or currently have a role model(s), can you talk about how this influenced you?
10. Reflecting on your administrative career, what kind of preparation and training programs do you think might help aspiring visible minority female teachers to prepare for a principalship?
11. Reflecting on your administrative career, what kinds of continuing professional development activities should visible minority female principals engage in?
12. In terms of visible minority female principal leadership, if you were given an opportunity to advise policy makers in education or government, what advice would you give them?
13. Have you ever or do you talk to your students about the fact that you are a member of a visible minority group?
14. As a female principal, is there a difference in your relationships with the female staff members as compared to your relationships with the male staff members?
15. Can you share your future plans and aspirations?

Ann:

1. You said you have a group of principals of whom you can ask any question for help. Do you think as a visible minority school principal, it is necessary to have at least one visible minority principal as a mentor?
2. Being a visible minority female school principal, do you think you are the same as or different from a white female school principal (except for color)? If you feel you are different from them, please explain in what ways you feel different.
3. In your interview you said you avoided talking your visible minority part. Does this mean that you think that you belong to the main stream culture or that people have accepted you as one of the main stream?
4. The literature mentions that visible minority female principals use reciprocal empowerment in their schools. Reciprocal empowerment means the principals empower those they work with (teachers and staff members) and these principals, in turn, receive power and help from them. In your administrative work, do you think you use reciprocal empowerment? If you do, can you give me an example?

5. Female leadership is also connected with an “ethic of care”. In your interview, I noticed that even though you did not use the words ethic of care, I sensed that you practice an ethic of care. Can you talk a little more about this?
6. Do you think race and gender have had or have a negative impact for you as a female leader? Please elaborate.
7. Who was or were role models for you when you were thinking about becoming a principal? Do you have a role model (role models) at the present time? If you had or currently have a role model(s), can you talk about how this influenced you?
8. Reflecting on your administrative career, what kind of preparation and training programs do you think might help aspiring visible minority females to prepare for a principalship?
9. Reflecting on your administrative career, what kinds of continuing professional development activities should visible minority female principals engage in?
10. In terms of visible minority female principal leadership, if you were given an opportunity to advise policy makers in education or government, what advice would you give them?
11. Have you ever or do you talk to your students about the fact that you are a member of a visible minority group?
12. As a female principal, is there a difference in your relationships with the female staff members as compare to your relationships with the male staff members?

Carol:

1. From your first and second interviews, I found that you received a lot of support from your family members and former principals. Did your husband support you in your efforts to become a principal? Can you give me one or two examples of the support you received from your husband?
2. In your second interview, you gave me a metaphor of your leadership style as “being a chair” to support people. From the literature, the typical leadership style for visible minority female school principals is “transformative leadership” and “inclusive leadership”. Do you think your leadership style also consists of these two styles? Please elaborate.
3. Imagine that you speak English with an accent. Do you think you would still get your present principal position today?
4. If you had an accent and you worked as a principal as you do now, do you think people would treat you differently?
5. You said you have a group of principals of whom you can ask any question for help. Do you think as a visible minority school principal, it is necessary to have at least one visible minority principal as a mentor?
6. In your interview you said you avoided talking about your visible minority status. Does this mean that you think that you belong to the main stream culture and that people have accepted you as one of the main stream?
7. What kinds of organizations presented challenges for you in your quest for a principal position?

8. Being a visible minority female school principal, do you think you are the same as or different from white female school principals (except for color)? If you feel you are different from them, please explain in what ways you feel different.
9. The literature mentions that visible minority female principals use reciprocal empowerment in their schools. Reciprocal empowerment means the principals empower those they work with (teachers and staff members) and these principals, in turn, receive power and help from them. In your administrative work, do you think you use reciprocal empowerment? If you do, can you give me an example?
10. Female leadership is also connected with an “ethic of care”. In your interview, I noticed that even though you did not use the words ethic of care, I sensed that you practice an ethic of care. Can you talk a little more about this?
11. Do you think race and gender have had or have a negative impact for you as a female leader? Please elaborate.
12. Who was or were role models for you when you were thinking about becoming a principal? Do you have a role model (role models) at the present time? If you had or currently have a role model(s), can you talk about how this influenced you?
13. Reflecting on your administrative career, what kind of preparation and training programs do you think might help aspiring visible minority females to prepare for a principalship?
14. Reflecting on your administrative career, what kinds of continuing professional development activities should visible minority female principals engage in?
15. In terms of visible minority female principal leadership, if you were given an opportunity to advise policy makers in education or government, what advice would you give them?
16. Have you ever or do you talk to your students about the fact that you are a member of a visible minority group?
17. As a female principal, is there a difference in your relationships with the female staff members as compared to your relationships with the male staff members?
18. Can you share your future plans and aspirations?

Appendix F: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in this research study *An Exploratory Study of the Administrative Work Life Experiences of Visible Minority Female Principals*. Please read this form carefully and feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you might have.

Name of Researcher: Bing Cui, Ph.D. Candidate.
 Department of Educational Administration
 College of Education,
 University of Saskatchewan
 Tel: (306) 966-7678
 Fax: (306) 382-0242
 E-mail: bic116@mail.usask.ca

Purpose and Procedure: The main purpose of this study is to investigate the administrative work life experiences of visible minority female school principals in Canadian schools. It is hoped that this study can fulfill four objectives. First, the study will allow the voices of visible minority female principals to be heard. Second, the barriers to success and acceptance which visible minority female principals experience can be identified and better understood. Third, readers will situate the leadership styles of visible minority female principals in terms of Canada's current multicultural and diverse educational context. Fourth, the strategies that contribute to successful administrative experiences for visible minority female principals need to be identified.

The study will be a qualitative case study base on a postpositivist perspective. The data collection procedures are mainly focused on a three-step in-depth semi-structured interviews model. In addition, the researcher will conduct documents and records analyses, and maintain researcher's reflective journals to triangulate the interview data and to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Data collection will be conducted from November, 2008 to November, 2010. It is anticipated that the time for each initial semi-structured interview will be about 1-2 hours. Each interview will be transcribed and a copy of each participant's transcript will be provided to each participant for review and editing. Interview questions will be made available to the participants prior to each interview. The interview questions are outlined in Appendix C.

The results of this study will be shared with the faculty of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan and may later be published in scholarly journals or contribute to conference presentations. The findings will be reported by means of a doctoral dissertation. This report will be an aggregate report that will utilize direct quotations by the participants.

Potential Benefits: The study will be a window to allow society to learn about the reality of visible minority female school principal leadership, to provide assistance and hope for visible minority women who are presently seeking or considering school-based administrative positions, or currently hold school-based administrative positions (Hopkins, 2003; Pacis, 2004). It is hoped that this study will urge educational authorities

to introduce policy and decision making on supporting visible minority female leadership in diverse and multicultural Canada school context. This study will contribute to filling the gap in the literature on visible minority female school principal leadership in Canada, assist in better understanding the areas of visible minority female educational school leadership, and suggest areas for further significant research.

Potential Risks: The risks for participating in this study are minimal. Participants will be made aware of the purpose of the study and why they have been invited to participate. Participants will also be made aware that participation in the study is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time without penalty of any kind. Participants will be informed that if they choose to withdraw from the study, their audio recordings and interview data will be destroyed. All measures will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants, and pseudonyms will be used when referring to individual participants and their schools and school divisions in data reporting.

Because the participants from this study have been selected from a small group of people, it is possible that they may be identifiable to other people. To minimize this possibility, pseudonyms will be used to maintain anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy. The large geographic area from which the participants are drawn should serve to further ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, all data will be securely stored and retained by the dissertation supervisor, Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, for a minimum of five years with the Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education in accordance with the Behavioral Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan Guidelines.

In addition to having the opportunity to review transcripts following each interview, the participants will have an opportunity to peruse the final report prior to completion of the study.

Storage of Data: During the study, all data collected will be securely stored with the researcher in the Department of Educational Administration. Upon completion of the study, Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart, research supervisor, will ensure the data, including interview transcripts, tape recordings, field notes, and my reflective memos, are stored in a secure location for a minimum of five years. After five years, all documents pertaining to this study will be destroyed.

Confidentiality: The participants will be informed that anonymity and confidentiality of participants and location will be maintained throughout the study by using pseudonyms. The documents containing the real names of the participants and other identifying information will be kept separately from the audio tapes, transcripts, analyses, and any written memos or summaries which result from this study other than the consent form.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally

benefit from your involvement. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with the researcher. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the research project at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed at your request.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the numbers provided if you have other questions. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect. Please note that at the completion of the study, you may request a summary of the findings.

Follow-Up or Debriefing: At the conclusion of each interview participants will be reminded of the next steps that will be taken in the study and will be invited to ask questions of the researcher at that time or by means of the contact information previously provided. Participants will be informed that once the dissertation is printed, the document will be available as a resource in the following two centers: The Education Library, College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan; the Educational Administration office, College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. I will also send a copy of complete dissertation to each of the participant.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

(Name of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Participant)

(Signature of Researcher)

Appendix G: Consent for Release of Transcripts

CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

In relation to the research study entitled, *An Exploratory Study of the Administrative Work Life Experiences of Visible Minority Female School Principals*, I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Bing Cui. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Bing Cui to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Date

Appendix H: Schematic Organization of the Story Map

SCHEMATIC ORGANIZATION OF THE STORYMAP

[illegible]

Appendix I: Audit Procedure

AUDIT PROCEDURE

The research audit was carried out in the following four stages: Preparation of the audit plan, selection of items to be tested by the auditor, performance of the audit test, and sharing of audit information.

1. Preparation of the audit plan: The researcher and the auditor determined the sample size to be tested. It was agreed between the researcher and the auditor that three open-ended responses (that appeared in the study) be tested per question.
2. Selection of items to be tested: The auditor selected the items to be tested using simple random sampling.
3. Performance of audit: The auditor performed the audit comparing the analysis of participants' responses (quotations and paraphrases) that appeared in the study with the data gathered from participants.
4. Sharing of audit information: The auditor and the researcher met to discuss the audit result.

Appendix J: Letter of Attestation

Letter of Attestation

This letter of attestation is in relation to the inquiry audit of the Ph.D. dissertation written by Bing Cui entitled “An Exploratory Study of The Administrative Work Life Experiences of Visible Minority Female School Principals.”

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the administrative work life of the visible minority female principals, with a particular focus on the path they took to become principals, the challenges they faced in the principal positions, and the strategies they used to foster inclusive schools.

Several research questions provided a focus for this study. The main research question for this study was: How is educational administration experienced from a female, visible minority point of view in Canada? The main question consisted of three questions: 1) What is the path to becoming a school principal for visible minority females? 2) What are the challenges visible minority female principals experience in their role as school principals? And 3) What strategies do visible minority female principals use to make their schools more inclusive?

The Audit Procedure --Verification and Accuracy of Transcripts and Disk Recordings.

1. Consent and Data/Transcript release forms

All of the five ‘Consent forms’ to participate in this research study and the five ‘Consent for Release of Transcripts’ forms for the five participants are reviewed for signatures and completion. The forms:

- a) list the participants of the study provided for the audit and
- b) are signed by the participants.

2. Selection of Samples for Verification and Accuracy of Disk Recordings to Transcripts:

a) Procedure and Observations for disk to transcripts tests:

There are five participants for this study and each was interviewed three times. There is a computer stick which contains the interview recordings of the five participants. I chose two participants randomly and listened to three recordings of each, comparing them at various intervals to the appropriate interview written transcripts.

b) Accuracy of Quotations in Relation to Data Sources

All comparisons between recordings and transcripts were positive. The words spoken on disk were the words that appeared in transcripts.

3. Accuracy of Dissertation Chapter Four References to Transcripts:

a) Procedure and Observations for Chapter 4 references.

I observed 26 quoted references in chapter 4 to the working papers. I chose a random sample of 13 of those references and compared them to the supporting working documents.

b) Accuracy of References in Dissertation to Disk Recording Transcripts.

All references investigated in Chapter Four were found and verified as accurate.

4. Inspection of Ethics Proposal and Certificate.

I have reviewed the candidate's application for approval of Research Protocol and the ethics statement provided. The procedures used by researcher and the protocols followed in the research are consistent with this approval. An analysis of the data reduction and interpretation of data was not considered by this audit. It remains for the researcher to turn the materials above, over to the University for secure storage for a five-year period.

5. Summary

Despite minor omissions the transcripts and data sheets are accurate transcriptions of the recorded interviews. The transcription of quotations in the dissertation represent a faithful record of the disk-held interview transcripts.

As a result of the audit, I as auditor, testify that the transcripts/data sheets which I have examined in relation to the Bing Cui dissertation are true and accurate.

Eric Campbell

Eric Campbell, B. Comm., M.B.A. (Queens) (retired member Institute of Internal Auditors and Association of College and University Auditors)

2009-10-01